Christ Alone Exalted

By Tobias Crisp D.D.

1643 Volume 1

CHRIST ALONE EXALTED

IN THE

PERFECTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SAINTS

NOTWITHSTANDING SINS AND TRIALS

BEING THE FIRST VOLUME OF TOBIAS CRISP, D.D. WORKS

SOMETIME MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, AT BRINKWATER, IN WILTSHIRE

PUBLISHED AFTER HIS DEATH IN 1643

TO WHICH ARE ADDED
NOTES EXPLANATORY OF SEVERAL PASSAGES IN THEM
WITH MEMOIRS OF THE DOCTOR'S LIFE
BY JOHN GILL, D.D.

Mr. Cole, In his Treatise on Regeneration, says, 'This work savours of a true Gospel Spirit; they who carp at it, 1 fear, will be found wider from the Gospel in their Principles, than this Author (as they vainly imagine) was in his."

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the Election of Grace. And if by Grace, then is it no more of Works : otherwise Grace is no more Grace. But if it be of Works, then It is no more Grace : otherwise Work is no more Works" Romans xi, 6, 6

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Publishers Introduction

The publisher was introduced to Tobias Crisp in 1974 through reading John Gill's Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity. He had been converted from crime to Christ in 1970. He could barely read as he was virtually illiterate. He studied the bible and this form of Christian literature in order to educate himself and was convinced that the doctrines of grace were those taught in the bible. For this reason these sermons are republished to encourage those that have believed in God and rest in Jesus Christ.

1 Preface by Henry Pinnell

TO THE IMPARTIAL READER

Reader; truth needs no shield to shelter it; her own bare breasts are armor of proof against all daring darts of ignorance and pride; and therefore walks fearless in the midst of all those torrents of bitter words; whoever vaunts in putting on his harness? Truth only triumphs in putting it off; this never quits the field without the Garland; for God that calleth to the combat carrieth on with a conquering hand; the gates of hell assault, but prevail not; for we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. The Prince of the air musters up his forces, and retreats; his black guard falls on with him, and are shamefully beaten back; kings, with their armies flee before it; the powers of darkness, like Jehu, march against it, furiously they attempt, they storm, but at the brightness that is before this Sun, the thick clouds remove; one of truth subverts the tents of darkness. What is stronger than truth, whose going out is as the morning, and riseth up to a glorious day? That ancient Emblem is a true Image of truth; a candle in a Lantern upon an high hill, beleaguered with tempestuous blasts, hangs out the flag of defiance, with this motto, Nisi Dominus Frusta; that is "except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." {Ps.127:1} It is but lost labour to dig a trench about that city for which the Lord hath appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks; but though it be secured from subversion, yet

it is not protected from opposition. You know how it went with Christ; was not his cradle cut out of the same wood of which his cross was made? His first entrance upon the stage of this world foreshadowed a black day at his departing; his sudden flight into Egypt from Herod's barbarous jealousy was but the Prologue to that sad tragedy, {a sad tragedy indeed to the carnal perception of those that put him to death,} which he ended on Mount Calvary; nor may his children or servants expect better entertainment; bonds or afflictions, or both, abide them that are faithful; they have called the Master an impostor, or glutton, Beelzebub; and is the servant above his Lord? I know this servant of truth hath had his share in suffering for it; envious men pursue those that out-go them; a Pharisee will stone any, even Christ, that shall presume to teach them beyond their old divinity. Much dirty gear hath been cast upon the Author of this book, which, if it could have fastened on him, I were {by special engagements} bound to wipe it off; but a false tongue cannot make a guilty person; Rabsheka's railing made no breach in Jerusalem's walls. Christ alone must be exalted, and all flesh made his foot-stool.

But there be some who seek to darken the wisdom of God with the words of men, and draw a specious veil over divine mysteries, that so {it may be not intentionally} understanding is hid from the simple; these make a fair show in the flesh. But I had rather see the king in his plainest clothes than his fool in a painted coat. Where is the scribe? Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? The loftiness of man must be laid low, his glory buried in the dust, all his perfections come to an end; but if thou desirest to see truth in a comely dress, and clear complexion, thou mayest have a full view thereof in this ensuing discourse. Say not the treatise is too small to contain so vast a subject, but rather admire his skill that discovers so much of heaven through so small a perspective. We applaud their art that contract the wide world into the narrow compass of a slender map; what a deal of worth is in a little diamond? How do men prize the dust of gold? Despise not small things; say not it is a little book; a little star may light thee to Christ; great bodies have most humours;

grosser volumes commonly are thickened with too much earth. If thou ask what is in this? I answer, as the voice once spake to Austin, Tolle Lege; {that is, take up and read;} or as Philip to Nathaniel, "Come and see." If I should say all that I know of the author, some that know me would say that I flatter him, because of my relation to him in his life, though I know there is little to be gotten by dead men's favour. But this I shall be bold to affirm, there is no Antinomianism in the title or tract; and from all vicious licentiousness of life, and scandalous aspersions cast on his person by lying lips, I stand upon my own experience, and more than twelve years knowledge to vindicate him; let the father of lies, and all his brood, come forth to make good their charge against him. I fear not to appear in his cause; yea, if I should not open my mouth in his behalf, whose industry and integrity God and his saints have so much approved, and from whose labours and yoke-fellow I have reaped so much comfort, if yet I should be silent, I desire to be marked with a black coal.

Try him now, and judge; thou wilt find no poison in his hive; no serpent lurks under his leaves. Take up and read; come, and see whether Jesus of Nazareth be not here; not sealed up in a sepulchre, and guarded with a rude train to keep his disciples from him, as the High Priests used to do; but thou shalt find him in his garden, opening his fountain, blowing on his spices, leading into his banqueting-house, staying with flagons, comforting on every side; thou shalt find more in this book than I will promise; only be persuaded to peruse it; if thou lovest thy rest, read it; for here is news of dry land, footing for thy soul, the Olive branch doth witness it; fear not, be not dismayed; the waters are abated; let not thy sloth make thee guilty of thy misery. Will not the weather-beaten mariner employ all his strength and oars to thrust into a quiet harbour? Is anything more desired by the chased hart than the cooling streams? How do men, pursued by the enemy, rejoice in the shelter of a strong hold? Can anything be more welcome to a notorious offender, justly condemned, than a gracious pardon? Is not God and his righteousness all this, and much more to a poor creature in such conditions? Behold a haven, a brook,

a tower, a pardon, a full, a free pardon, a ransom for thy soul; the righteousness of God breaking through the sides, the hands, the heart of Christ, to make way to thee, to revive thy dying, drooping, bleeding heart. Incline thine ear, hearken for time to come; hear, and thy soul shall live; forsake not thine own mercies to observe lying vanities; lean not to the reeds of Egypt, when thou hast the rod of God's strength put into thy hand. Shall there be a price in the hand, and no heart to it? It may be thy feet have not yet stumbled, though thou hast walked on the hills of earth, the mountains of the world, the high mountains of the flesh, thy way hath been smooth and easy; so is the wild ass's till her month overtake her; thy conscience, perhaps, hath fancied some shadow of peace by the dull glimmering of an earthly spark; but they that walk in that light, at last lie down in sorrow. {Isaiah 1:11}

Be not proud therefore, but give glory to God, before he cause darkness, before he turn your light into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness; that darkness that might be felt was not the least of the Egyptian plagues. What greater torment than the conscience once sensible of being destitute of the light of life? The author's aim is to lead thee into Goshen, to guide thy feet into the way of peace; follow him, walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, that faith, of which circumcision was no cause, nor evidence to himself; for he had it, and he knew he had it, before he was circumcised; by this faith he gave glory to God; we give glory to the robe of God's righteousness, when we put none of our own under it to make it sit uneasy, nor wear any of our own upon it, to obscure the full glory of it; thou wilt find this garment the best fashion, and as well held forth by this, as by any man, whose intentions were to cover all blemishes, all sins, to hide all deformity with it; yet to shelter no lust, nor sin under it. I might launch out into his life, and call in all his practice to prove it; but till more need require, I shall refer thee to Mr Lancaster in his preface to the first volume, and to the present trial of his doctrine. Let a Christian heart moderate a critical eye, and find fault that can. The God that once breathed the rich knowledge of himself through the frail organs of this earthen vessel, into

the ears of those that heard him, now dart a greater glory of his righteousness and grace into the eyes of all their understandings that shall read him.

I know I can add no worth to this work; it is of divine value, it hath the stamp of heaven, the image of God is on it; the author is gone home, and yet living with the Lord, though some think the saints die, and like the wicked, leave a stink behind them. I deny not the mortality of any, nor need I hang this man's hearse with odoriferous encomiums; yet he that visits his friend, though never so godly, in the grave, had need take a little frankincense in his hand, if he be buried among men; all the air in the world is so contagiously infected with the stinking breath of the living, that you cannot come near the dead without a bundle of myrrh. Malice and madness like a gangrene stands at the tomb and tent of every blessed soul, crying, "touch me not." Of all men, one would have thought so sweet a man as Christ had needed no spices in his sepulchre; for he did no evil, and he saw no corruption; yet Joseph would not inter his body without sweet odours, though Mary had bestowed a whole box of precious ointment on his feet in his life-time, but a little before his burial. Let the saints walk never so wisely, warily, circumspectly; let them keep their feet as clean, as sweet as they can, they had need of their winding sheet and coffin perfumed; I say not with the parasitical smoke of a perfumed oration, but with a just vindication of their inocency as occasion shall require. But I hope there will be need of no engagement from me this way in the author's behalf; for his two last sermons in this volume are a clear vindication of him from those common aspersions laid upon him and the doctrine he preached, which for that reason amongst others, has now come into the world before their full growth, the author being taken away before he could bring forth all his conceptions in the pursuit of those two subjects; which we desire the reader candidly to accept as the last breathings forth of the spirit in that precious saint whilst he was below. But if this stops not the mouth of envy, I shall not think any cost too great to raise up and continue the memory of truth's favourites and friends; nor esteem any labour too much, whereby

I may approve myself the friend and servant of Christ Jesus and his church, otherwise than which {by God's grace} thou shalt never find,

The Subject of Christ,
and Servant of his Saints,

Henry Pennell

2 Memoirs Of The Life, Of Tobias Crisp, D.D.

Tobias Crisp descended both by father and mother from the richest families of the city of London, in which they had borne, the highest offices; he was the third son of Ellis Crisp, a rich merchant and alderman of the said city, (as his father before him had been) and was sheriff of the same when he died, Nov. 13, 1625. Sir Nicholas Crisp was the elder brother of Tobias, a person of great capacity for business, a rich and industrious merchant, was taken notice of at court in the reign of King Charles the First, by whom he was knighted[1] and made one of the farmers of his customs ; he was a famous royalist in the times of the civil wars, did much service to the king, and suffered much in his cause ; he was one of the committee sent by the City of London to King Charles the Second, at Breda, to invite him over, by whom he was received with peculiar marks of affection as his father's old friend ; and, upon the king's restoration, was reinstated into his post as one of the farmers of the customs, and was created a baronet, April 16, 1665, and died Feb. 26, following.

Tobias was born in Bread-street, London, in the year 1600, and had his education for grammar-learning in Eton School, near Windsor, and began his academical studies in the University of Cambridge, where he continued until he commenced bachelor of arts ; and from thence he removed to Oxford, for the finishing of his studies, and attaining some certain parts of learning, and was

1 Biographia Britannica p. 15-22 &c.

incorporated a member of Baliol College[2] in Feb. 1626. When he received the degree of doctor in divinity is not certain, only it appears, that upon the breaking out of the civil wars, he had been of some years standing in that degree.

In the year 1627, and about the 27th year of his age, he became rector of Brinkworth in Wiltshire, where he continued until the time of the civil wars, and was much followed for his edifying way of preaching, [3] and for his great hospitality to all persons that resorted to his house. His style of preaching tended to edification, being spiritual and evangelical, and suited to the case of souls made truly sensible of sin : and adapted to their condition, and to the peace and comfort of them, as well as was plain and familiar, and easy to be understood by those of the meanest capacity; appears by the following discourses, in which he often illustrates the deepest mysteries of grace by things common among men, and known to all. And as he had a plentiful estate of his own, he was liberal and hospitable to strangers that came far and near to attend upon his ministry ; and, according to good information from some of his descendants, an hundred persons, yea, and many more, have been received and entertained in his house at one and the same time, and ample provision made for man and horse.

He set out first in the legal way of preaching, in which he was exceeding zealous, and had an earnest desire to glorify God in his life and ministry ; nor did he seek for, but refused all worldly advancement, to which his way was open through his parentage and friends ; but gave himself up wholly[4] to the preaching of the word, and a conscientious practice of it, and was unblameable in his life and conversation ; none being more, and few so, constant in preaching, praying, repeating sermons, performing public, family, and private exercises, in the strict observation of the duties of the Lord's-day : nor did he at all abate, but increased, in his zeal for glorifying God in this way, after he had a clearer knowledge of Christ, and of the doctrines of grace

2 Wood's Athenae, Ib.

3 Wood Ib.

4 Lancaster's preface to vol. III of the Doctor's sermons.

; working from better principles, and with better views, willing to spend, and be spent, for the service of the meanest of God's people ; being far from pride, vanity, and self-conceitedness, and full of meekness, lowliness, and tender-heartedness ; whereby it appeared, that the gospel of Christ had a very great influence upon his soul, and which engaged him to preach it freely without any expectation of worldly advantage, and in a way which was sure to bring upon him not the credit and esteem of men, but reproach and persecution, his doctrine being falsely charged with Antinomianism : though the inocency and harmlessness of his life, and his fervency in goodness, as Mr. Lancaster observes, was a manifest practical argument to confute the slanders of Satan, against the most holy faith which he preached. Mr Neal[5] says, that the Doctor in his younger days had been a favourer of Arminianism ; but, changing his opinion, he ran into the contrary extreme of Antinomianism. That he was inclined to Arminianism, if not in it, and went on in the legal way of preaching for some time, is certain ; which he relinquished upon a rich experience and clear knowledge of the free grace of God in Christ ; but that he went into real Antinomianism, must be denied ; his sermons upon " Free grace the teacher of good works," and " The use of the law," with others, abundantly prove the contrary. However, the above writer is pleased to give this character of him, that he "as certainly a learned and religious person, modest and humble in his behaviour, fervent and laborious in his ministerial work, and exact in his morals." Nor does he want the testimonies of men of the greatest figure, in learning and religion, to his character and usefulness: partcularly the famous Dr. Twisse, prolocutor to the assembly of divines and whom some have called " Flos scholasticorum," thus, on occasion, expressed himself concerning him ; that he " had read Dr. Crisp's, sermons[6], and could give no reason why they were opposed, but because so many were converted by his preaching, and (said he) so few by ours." That excellent Dutch professor of divinity, Kcornbeck, calls him a learned divine, and says, " *Pervolui ego tres volumisum libellos*

5 Hist of the Purians vol.iii. p28

6 Mr. Samuel Crisp's Preface to Crist made sin, p 4.

Tobiae Crispi, doct. thcologi, quorum titidum fecit, [7]Christ alone exalted ;" and observes, that he, with others of the same principles, had no ill design, but that the glory of Christ might the more appear, cast down all the works, dispositions, and conditions of men, and confidence in them, besides him. That truly good man Mr. Cole, the author of a valuable treatise on Regeneration, declared, that if he had but one hundred pounds in the world, and Dr. Crisp's book could not be had without giving fifty pounds for it, he would give it, rather than be without it[8] ; saying, " I have found more satisfaction in it, than in all the books in the world, except the bible " When the Doctor entered into the marriage-state is not certain ; very probably about the time, or before, he became Rector of Brinkworth, as should seem by the number of children he had, he dying in 1642. He married Mary Wilson daughter and heiress of Rowland Wilson of London, merchant. She was sister to the famous Colonel Rowland Wilson, who was So distinguished in the times of the civil wars; who, though he was heir to £2000 per annum in land, and partner with his father in a large personal estate employed in merchandize, yet, for the service of God, and the good of his country, took upon him the command of a city-regiment[9] under the parliament. He was one of the trustees for the sale of deans' and chapters' lands, and muster-master-general of the forces of Warwick and Coventry; was appointed a commissioner of the high court of justice for the trial of the king, but refused to act ; was member of parliament, and alderman and sheriff of the city of London : the accepting of which last office was voted by the parliament, an acceptable service to the common-wealth ; he was of the council of state for the year 1649, and died quickly after, being attended to his grave by the members of parliament and council of state, the lord-mayor and aldermen, divers citizens of London, and officers of the army, the city-regiment, of which he was Colonel, and other companies of soldiers. He died before his father, who gave the greatest part of his substance to the children of Dr. Tobias Crisp,

7 Sum. Cont p. 702, I. 10.

8 Mr. Samuel Crisp's pre. ut supra

9 Whitlocks's memorials &c. p. 72 363-384, 390-394,398-425,428

and his widow, who survived the Doctor 31 years[10], she dying 20th of September, 1673 ; by whom he had thirteen children, two died before him, and he left eleven behind him ; their names were Rowland, Ellis, Mary, Tobias, Samuel, Esther, Edward, Rowland, Nicholas, Elizabeth, Anne, Jane, John. His son Samuel, who was one of the governors of Christ Church Hospital, London, published the last edition of his father's works, with a preface to them, and wrote several things in defence of them; one called, " Christ made sin ;" another, " Christ alone exalted," in Dr. Crisp's sermons ; a third, " Christ Exalted, and Dr. Crisp vindicated." He was one of the first that joined in the communion of the church, at Clapham Surrey in the Nonconformists'' way, and survivor[11] of them all. He died June 20, 1703.

But to return to the Doctor ; upon the breaking out of the civil wars, and to avoid the insolence of the cavalier soldiers, he left his rectory of Brinkworth in Aug. 1642, and retired to London ; where, and about it, he preached several of the sermons afterwards printed ; whereby his sentiments about the doctrines of grace were soon discovered, in which he was opposed city-divines[12] ; and (to use Mr. Wood's words) baited by fifty-two opponents in a grand dispute concerning the freeness of the grace of God, in Jesus Christ, to poor sinners ; by which encounter, which was eagerly managed on his part, he contracted a disease that brought him to his grave. He died of the small-pox, February 27, 1642, being about forty-two years of age, and was buried in a vault, belonging to his family, under part of the church of St. Mildred, in Bread-street, London.

So, as (Mr. Lancaster says)[13] after his natural strength was sensibly spent, in the service of the Lord, by constant and laborious preaching, praying, repeating, and studying, oftentimes whole nights, to the impairing and ruining of his health, it pleased the Lord to call him, by his last visitation, unto his eternal rest ; wherein there appeared such faith, such joy, such a quiet

10 Mr. Crisp's pre.&c. ut supra.

11 Mr. Grace's funeral sermon, p.41.

12 Athenae, p.II.

13 Lancaster's pre. &c.ut supra.

and appeased conscience, such triumph over death and hell, as made the standers-by amazed ; and, a little before his death, he professed, before some present, the stedfastness of his faith, to this effect, " that as he had lived in the free grace of God, through Christ, so he did, with confidence and great joy, even as much as his present condition was capable of, resign his life and soul into the hands of his most dear Father."

Sermons

I Christ The Only Way {1}

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6}

In the 33rd verse of the former chapter, you shall find Christ breaking the sad and doleful business, which he knew well would go near to the hearts of his disciples; namely, his departure from them; "Little children, yet a little while ye shall seek me, but shall not find me." Peter, upon this, asks him whither he goes? He tells him, whither he cannot follow him now, but afterwards he shall. Now, knowing how sadly this went to the hearts of his disciples, Christ labored to raise them up, and to establish them against the drooping that these sad tidings might occasion; and that is the beginning of this chapter, "Let not your hearts be troubled;" and therein doth endeavor to stir up their spirits first, by telling them the expediency of that departure of his. It was the purpose of God, that as all things should be wrought effectually by Christ, so the communication of all these things to our spirits, should be by the Spirit of Christ. Now Christ tells them expressly, "That except he goes away, the Comforter cannot come to them;" he, that must have the dispensing of those things to their spirits, namely, the Comforter, cannot come unto them. But, secondly, he stays not here; he encourageth them with another argument; "I go to prepare a place;" and he tells them the place where; "In my Father's house are many mansions." And least they should suspect, he tells them, "If it were not so, I would have told you." And because he would not speak in a cloud of these things, he

tells them, "You know whither I go, and the way ye know." Now Thomas comes in with an objection; "We know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Christ answers him, in the words of the text, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me."

I will not spin out the tune about the coherence and analysis of this text; the main point is briefly this; Christ is our way, so that there is no coming to the Father but by Him.

In the handling of which truth, let me tell you, that I know this doctrine is generally received, as it is generally delivered; but, I fear, in the particularizing those things that make up the full truth of the doctrine, every spirit will not, nor can receive it. That you may, at least, see the clear truth in the bowels of this general doctrine; {for, beloved, you must know there is hidden manna, in this very pot} I say, that you may both see it, and taste the sweetness of it, let us consider; First, in what regard Christ is said to be "the way to the Father." Secondly, what kind of way he is. Thirdly, from whence he doth become this way. Fourthly, what use we may make of it.

I. In what sense Christ is said to be our way, that there is "no coming to the Father but by him." You all know beloved, that every way highway, or pathway, necessarily imports two terms, from whence and whereunto; when a man enters into a way, he leaves the place where he was, and goes to the place where he was not. Christ being our way, the phrase imports thus much to us, that by Christ we pass from a state and condition wherein we were to a state and condition wherein we were not; the last term is expressed in the text, "He is the way to the Father;" the first term must be implied. To come to him, ye must leave some condition where we were before. Bear a while with the expression, till I open the thing to you.

The state, from which Christ is our way to the Father, is twofold; first, a state of sin; and secondly, a state of wrath. The state whereunto Christ is the way, is, indeed, expressed here to be to the Father; the meaning is, to the grace of the Father, and to the glory of the Father. The sum is this; Christ is our way, from

a state of sin and wrath, to a state of grace and glory, that there is no coming from the one to the other, but by Christ. But we must descend to particulars, that we may know the fatness and marrow of this truth; which indeed hath an inebriating virtue in it, to lay a soul asleep, with the admirable sweetness and excellency thereof; for no music can tickle the ears as this truth may, when it is truly and thoroughly dived into; no, nor tickle the heart neither. Beloved, I must tell you, when your soul once find this real truth, they cannot choose but say, we have found a ransom.

First of all, Christ is a way from a state of sinfulness. Now what mystery is there in this, more than ordinary, will you say? Beloved, it is certainly true, there is nothing of Christ, there is nothing comes from Christ, but it is in a mystery; the gospel seems to be clear, and so it is, to those whose eyes Christ opens, but certainly it is hid to some persons that shall perish. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, O Father, because it pleased thee." But what hiddenness is in this? There is a two-fold consideration of sinfulness, from which Christ is our way in a special manner. There is first that which commonly we call the guilt of sin, which indeed is the fault, or a person's being faulty, as he is a transgressor. There is, secondly, the power or dominion of sin. Christ is the way from both these. First of all, Christ is the way from the guilt of sin; for a man to be rid of the guilt of sin is no more but this, namely, upon trial to be acquitted from the charge of sin that is laid to him, and to be freed from it; or for a person, in judgment, to be pronounced actually an innocent and a just person, as having no sin to be charged upon him; this is to be free from the guilt of sin. A man is not free from a fault, as long as the fault is laid to his charge; he is then free from the fault, when it is not charged upon him. All the powers of the world united are not able to pronounce a person faultless and an innocent person, but only the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the way by which a poor sinner, even in this world, may be pronounced an innocent person; even in this world, I say; and be acquitted and discharged from the fault and

guilt of his sin. It is impossible the law should do it; the apostle speaks of it expressly, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ hath freed me from the law of sin and death." {Rom.8:2} Here it is put upon Christ, to free from the guilt of sin. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," for sin condemned sin in the flesh. The law, saith the text, could not do it; not that the law could not pronounce innocence where innocency was; not that the law could not condemn sin, where it is condemnable by its authority; the law can do this, if it can find subjects whereupon to do it. But the law runs upon these terms, as it finds a person himself without fault; so it pronounceth sentence upon him; if it finds a fault in his person, then it chargeth this fault upon the person alone, as thus; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Till then thou canst not be absolutely freed from the acting of a thing in its nature that is faulty; thou canst not hear it speak any otherwise but of faultiness, which it chargeth upon thee.

Much less can the heart of man acquit him as an innocent person, or do away from him that sinfulness, namely, the guilt of his own sin. "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts." "If a man say he hath no sin, he is a liar," with St. John, "and the truth is not in him." If the heart should say to any man he is an innocent person, it doth but lie.

If angels should spend their strength, and should be annihilated, to procure the innocency of a poor sinner; alas, their very being is too poor a price, or too mean a value, to take away the sins of the world.

Beloved, to go a little further in it, it is not man's righteousness that he does, though assisted by the Spirit of God in the acting of it, that can pronounce him an innocent person, that can be a way to him from his fault and guiltiness. This you know, that the payment of the last half year's rent is no payment for the first half year's rent, nor is it amends for the non-payment of that which was due before; if that had been paid before, for this likewise must be paid now. Suppose a man could perform a righteous action without blame, what satisfaction is this for former transgressions? Nay,

beloved, let me tell you, there is nothing but menstruousness, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, in the best of man's righteousness, for all our righteousness is a menstruous cloth; {Is.64:6;} but as for Christ, that blessed Saviour, he is able to "save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;" not only to save them in respect of glory hereafter, but also to save them in respect of sinfulness here; to snatch them as a fire-brand out of the fire of their own sin, to deliver them from their own transgression. Christ, I say, is the way, and the absolute and complete way, to rid every soul that comes to God by him, from all filthiness; so that the person to whom Christ is the way, stands in the sight of God as having no fault at all in him. Beloved, these two are contradictions, for a person to be reckoned a faulty person, and yet that person to be reckoned a just or an innocent person; if he be faulty, he is not innocent; if he be innocent, he is not faulty. Now it is the main stream of the whole gospel, that Christ justifies the ungodly. If he himself justifies him, there is no fault to be cast upon him; mark it well, as that wherein consists the life of your soul and the joy of your spirits. I say, it holds forth the Lord Christ as freely tendering himself to people, as considering them only as ungodly persons receiving him; you have no sooner received him, but you are instantly justified by him, and, in this justification, you are discharged from all the faults that may be laid to your charge. There is not one sin you commit, after you receive Christ, that God can charge upon your person.[14]

A man would think, that there needs not much time to be spent to clear such a truth as this is, being so currently carried along by the whole stream of the gospel. But beloved, because I know tender hearts stumble much at it, give me leave to clear it unto you by manifest scriptures, such as are written in such great letters, as he that runs may read them. Observe that in Psalm 51. "Wash me," saith David; what then? "I shall be whiter than snow." Snow, you know, hath no spot at all, no fault, no blemish. David

14 1 That is, to condemnation; because all have been charged on Christ, and he has made satisfaction for them; and besides, in this manifestative justification the Doctor is speaking of, there is an open and full discharge from all sin. Gill.

shall be less blameable, have less faultiness, have less spottedness in him, than is in the very snow itself. In Canticles 4:7, you shall find Christ speaking strange language to his church; admirable language indeed; "Thou art fair my love," saith Christ, "thou hast no spot in thee at all." I do but cite the very words of the text; therefore let none cavil least they be found fighters against God; "she hath no spot in her." In Isaiah 53, where he speaks admirably concerning the effectualness of Christ's death, he tells us, "That the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" thy iniquities, my iniquities; as our forefathers' iniquities, so our posteritys iniquities; the iniquities of us all the Lord hath laid upon Christ; they cannot lie upon Christ, and us too. If they be reckoned to the charge of Christ, they are not reckoned to the charge of the person that doth receive this Christ; but "the Lord hath laid them upon him," saith the text; and what iniquity? Doth he lay upon him some iniquity, and leave some iniquity to us? Look into Ezek.36:25, and you shall see the extent of iniquities that God hath laid upon Christ; that he takes away from the sinner, I mean the sinner justified by Christ that received him; there you have the covenant largely repeated, the new covenant; not according to the covenant God made with our fathers; and the first words of the covenant are these; "I will sprinkle you with Clean water, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," from all your filthiness; small sins, as some will call them; great sins, turbulent sins, scandalous sins, any sins, any filthiness; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness, and from all your idols. Look into Ezek.16:6, a notable chapter indeed, setting open the unsearchable riches of the love of Christ to men; I "saw thee polluted in thine own blood," saith he; such blood "that no eye could pity thee, or do any good to thee." Well, no creature doth pity him; was it so with God? No. "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, live; yea, when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee live; when I passed by thee, thy time was the time of love," saith God, "I spread my skirt over thee and covered thy nakedness." Mark it, I pray you; not a scanty skirt to cover some of this blood and filth, but a broad skirt, a large

skirt, a white raiment, as Christ calls it himself in the Revelation; "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment, that thy nakedness may not appear." It seems there is such a covering of Christ that he casts upon a person, while he is considered in his blood, that covers his nakedness, that none of it doth appear; and yet, a little further in Ezekiel 16, then was she dyed in deep water, after she was in covenant; "yea I thoroughly washed away thy blood;" and this was added, that no man might cavil. It is true, God casts a covering over our sinfulness, but it is our sinfulness still; it is but covered; nay, with the Lord, I have washed it away; "then washed I thee with water." But some will say these are obscure texts and mystical; a man cannot build upon these, that faultiness is not reckoned to believers, being taken off by Christ. To come, therefore, to a clearer manifestation of the gospel, mark what the apostle saith in Eph.5:27, Christ "purges and sanctifies his church that he might present it to himself not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it may be holy, and without blame." The words run in the present tense; not that in glory only we shall be without spot, but now, even now, we shall be without blemish, we shall be without spot and wrinkle; and that he might now present us to himself. So in II Cor.5:21, you shall see the truth spoken more emphatically, the Apostle runs in a mighty strain in this business; "He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Both terms are expressed in the abstract; he was made sin for us; here you see plainly, our sins are to be translated to Christ; that God reckons Christ the very sinner; nay, God reckons all our sins to be his, and makes him to be sin for us; and what is the fruit of this?[15] We are thereby made the righteousness of God in him. If we be righteousness, where is our sinfulness to be charged upon us? He tells us expressly, in I John 1:7, "That the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" the blood of Christ doth cleanse us; he doth not say, the blood of Christ shall cleanse us from all sin; but he saith, for the present time, the blood of Christ doth cleanse us from all sin. John the Baptist hath

15 That is, by imputation; not as the author and committer of sin; and, in the same way, God reckons our sins to be Christ's; not as committed by him, but are imputed to him. Gill.

this expression, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." He takes them away. How doth he take them away, and yet leave them behind, and yet charge them upon the person that doth believe? The person must be discharged, or else how can they be taken away. This is the main thing imported in that notable sacrifice of the scape-goat. {Lev.16:21} The high-priest must lay his hand upon the head of the goat to be carried away into the wilderness; the text saith, "it was the laying the sins of the people, and that when they were laid upon him, he goes into the wilderness." He goes into the wilderness and leaves their sins behind him; then the end of this service were frustrated; for he was to carry them away upon him; so Christ, as the scape-goat, hath our sins laid upon his back, and he carries them away; and, therefore, in Psalm 103:12, it is said, "that God removes our sins from us, as far as the East is from the West; he casts our sins into the bottom of the sea." Besides all these texts of scripture, I might produce multitudes more, if need were, for this purpose; but, I think, there can be nothing in the world more clear than this truth, that Christ is such a way to a poor believing soul that he hath received, that he might take and carry away all the sins of such a person; that he is no longer reckoned as having sins upon him.

But some will object, do not those that receive Christ actually commit sin? I answer, yea, they do commit sin, and the truth is, they can do nothing but commit sin. If a person that is a believer hath anything in the world, he hath received this, that if he doth anything that is good, it is the Spirit of God that doth it, not he; therefore, he himself doth nothing but sin, his soul is a mint of sin. But then, you will say, if he doth sin, must not God charge it where it is? Must not he be reckoned to be a sinner, while he doth sin? I answer, no; though he doth sin, yet he is not to be reckoned a sinner, but his sins are reckoned to be taken away from him.[16]

16 Not that the believer who has received Christ, ceases to be a sinner in himself; for the Doctor affirms, in this same paragraph, that he commits sin, and does nothing but sin; and much less that he ceased to be a sinner before he was a believer or from the death of Christ, as D. W. in his "Gospel Truth, &c," falsely being charged to him, and expiated and atoned for by his sacrifice; as also, seeing such a one has received, with Christ, a discharge from all his sins into his own conscience, he should reckon himself, and his sins, as God does, who reckons them to Christ, and not to him.

A man borrows a hundred pounds; some man will say, doth he not owe this hundred pounds, seeing he borrowed it? I say, no, in case another hath paid the hundred pounds for him. A man doth sin against God, God reckons not his sin to be his, he reckons it Christ's; therefore he cannot reckon it his. If the Lord did lay the iniquity of men upon Christ {as I said before,} then how can he lay it upon their persons? Thou hast sinned, Christ takes it off; supposing, I say, thou hast received Christ. And as God doth reckon sin to Christ, and charges sin upon him, so, if thou be of the same mind with God, thou must also reckon this sin of thine upon Christ; his back hath borne it, he hath carried it away.

For my part, I cannot see what every person will object; I will endeavor to make this truth clear as the day to you. Do but consider with yourselves what Christ came into the world for, if not to take away the sins of the world? He need never to have died, but to take away the sins of the world. Did he come to take them away, and did he leave them behind him? Then he lost his labour. Did he not leave them behind him? Then his person is discharged of them from whom he hath taken them; but if the person be not discharged of them, he is not a justified person in himself; neither can you account his person justified as long as you account his sin upon him. It is a contradiction to say, that a man is innocent, yet guilty. Beloved, then here is a point of strange ravishing usefulness to souls, that can but draw towards it and receive it. All the difficulty lies, whether it be my portion, and thy portion; whether I may say, Christ is my way, thus from this guilt, that there can be none of this charged upon me. I say, if thou dost receive Christ, if thou dost but set footing into this way, Christ; as soon as ever thou art stept into this way, thou art stept out of the condition thou wast in. Men's receiving of Christ! What is that? You will say; to receive him, is to come to him; "he that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." Mark; many think there is such a kind of sinfulness that is a bar to them; that though they would have Christ, yet there is not a way open for them to take him. Beloved, there is no way of sinfulness to bar thee from coming to Christ; if thou hast a heart to come to him, and, against

all objections to venture thyself with joy into the bosom of Christ, for the discharge of all thy sinfulness; Christ himself {which I tremble to express; though it be with indignation} should be a liar, if thou comest to him, and he casts thee off. "Every one that will," saith he, "let him come and drink of the water of life freely." You shall find, beloved, the great complaint of Christ, thus, "he came to his own, and his own received him not;" and to the Scribes and Pharisees, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The truth is, men dote upon the establishing of a righteousness of their own to bring them to Christ; and it is but presumptuous or licentious doctrine, that Christ may be their Christ, and they receive him, and be considered simply ungodly, as enemies; but they are abominably injurious to the faith of Jesus Christ, to the exceeding bounty of that grace of his, who saves from sin, without respect of anything in the creature, that he himself might have the praise of the glory of his grace. The covenant, concerning the blotting out of transgressions, is a free covenant; "not for thy sake do I this, be it known unto thee," saith the Lord, "for thou art a stubborn and stiff necked people; but for my own sake do I this." All this grace to acquit thy soul, here and hereafter, comes out of the bowels of God himself; and he hath no other motive in the world, but simply, and only, his own bowels, that put him upon the deliverance of a poor wretch from iniquity, and discharge of sin, from that load which otherwise would grind and crush him to powder; I say, his own bowels are the motive. God neither looks to anything in the creature to win him to show kindness, nor yet anything in the creature to debar him; neither righteousness in men that persuades God to pardon sin; nor unrighteousness in men that hinders him from giving this pardon, and acquitting them from their transgressions; it is only and simply for his own sake he doth it unto men.

Thus you have seen the first particular that I have endeavored to clear from all cavils and objections that may be laid upon it.

In one word, beloved, mistake me not, I am far from imagining any believer is freed from acts of sin; he is freed only from the charge of sin; that is, from being a subject to be charged

with sin; all his sins are charged upon Christ, he being made sin for him; yet Christ is not an actual sinner; but Christ is all the sinners in the world by imputation; and through this imputation all our sins are so done away from us, that we stand as Christ's own person did stand, and doth stand in the sight of God.[17] Now, had not Christ made a full satisfaction to the Father, he himself must have perished under those sins that he did bear; but in that he went through the thing, and paid the full price, as he carried them away from us, so he laid them down from himself. So that now Christ is freed from sin, and we are freed from sin in him; he was freed from sin imputed unto him and laid upon him, when he suffered; we were freed from sin as he takes it off from our shoulders, and hath carried it away. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." That is, with sin. And what follows? "And I will give you rest." As long as the burden is upon the shoulders, so long there is no rest. Therefore this doth necessarily import, that Christ must take away the burden, that we may have rest. Secondly, Christ is not only the way from the fault of sin, but he is the way from the power of sin. There is a threefold power of sin; there is first, a reigning power; and secondly, a tyrannizing power; and thirdly, a bustling or ruffing power of sin; and they are all three of them distinct. Christ is a way from all these in believers; from the reigning power of it; so the Apostle speaks expressly, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." {Rom.6:14} Grace there is Christ himself. "His servants ye are, to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death," or of righteousness unto life; but, thanks be to God, "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine

17 This shows what is the Doctor's true sense in a former passage, where he says Christ is "the very sinner;" that is, by imputation, as here explained, and not an actual sinner. One would be tempted to think, at first reading this clause, that the Doctor was for universal redemption, when he says, that Christ is "all the sinners in the world" by imputation; and, perhaps, such expressions as these with some others that will be observed hereafter, made the learned Hoornbeck conclude, that he held the doctrine of universal redemption; but his sense is not, that Christ personated all the sinners in the world, or had all the sins of every individual person laid on him; but that he was all those sinners in the world, or represented them, whose sins were imputed to him; and these, as he often says in his sermons on Isaiah 53:6, were the iniquities of the Lord's people, of the church, and of the elect. Gill.

which was delivered you." The meaning is this; while we are under the law, and have no better help, sin reigns in us, the law cannot bridle it in; but when we come under grace by Christ, the dominion of the law, or rather the dominion of sin, which the law cannot restrain, is captivated and subjected by Christ; "I will subdue your iniquities," as it is spoken by the prophet Micah. We are discharged from the fault and guilt of sin, that is, absolutely at once; {Acts 13:39;} but the discharge from the reigning power of sin, that is done by degrees; the faultiness of sin is left behind the back of the believer, but the power and resistency of sin lie all along in the way; but still Christ breaks through, and makes way, I Cor.10:13, where you have this admirable expression, "No temptation hath happened unto you, but such as is common to men; God is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way that you may be able to bear it."

There is a tyrannizing power of sin; that is, not when sin is chosen of the soul, as that under which the soul both affects and will live; but when sin hath gotten a present over-mastery of the soul, and in spite of all the spirit can do, will keep it under. This, I say, is the tyranny of sin; and this was the case of the apostle Paul, Romans, chapter 7, "when I would do good, evil is present with me;" I find "a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin;" so that "the good I would do, I do not; and the evil that I would not, that do I." In regard of which he makes a bitter complaint; but mark the end of all, "but thanks be to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here you see that though sin hath a tyranny over the spirit of a person, yet through the Lord Jesus Christ this tyranny is abated.

Yet thirdly, it is abated by degrees; for the bustling power of sin, namely, though it cannot be entertained, yet it will be troublesome to the soul. Now Christ is the way, by degrees, also, from this trouble of sin; for by degrees he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof, and brings down the power of it by treading down Satan, that is the egger on of sin, to make it so troublesome; by overcoming the world, that administers occasion

of this troublesomeness. "Fear not," saith Christ, "I have overcome the world." But still, I say, he doth this by degrees, and so he doth it by degrees, that sometimes he lets the work be at a stand; and sometimes the tyranny shall be over the spirit, and the spirit shall be under that tyranny a good while; sometimes the spirit shall be under the troublesomeness of sin, and be constantly exercised with it. But you must know that it is neither the tyranny, nor the troublesomeness of sin in a believer, that doth eclipse the beauty of Christ, or the favor of God to the soul. Our standing is not founded upon the subduing of our sins, but upon that foundation that never fails, and that is Christ himself; upon his faithfulness and truth. Men think they are consumed, when they are troubled with sin; why? Because of their transgression. But mark what the Lord saith; "I, the Lord, change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." It is not, you change not, therefore ye are not consumed; but I change not; I have loved you freely, I will love you freely, I cannot alter; "whom he loves, he loves unto the end;" and this is in respect of his unchangeableness.

Though there be ebbings and flowings of the outward man; nay, of the inward man, in the business of sanctification; yet this is certainly true, that believers are kept by the mighty "power of God, through faith, unto salvation." They are kept in holiness, sincerity, simplicity of heart; but all this hath nothing to do with the peace of his soul, and the salvation and justification thereof.[18] Christ is he that justifies the ungodly; Christ is he that is the Peacemaker; and as Christ is the peacemaker, so all this peace depends upon Christ alone. Beloved, if you will fetch your peace from anything in the world but Christ, you will fetch it from where it is not. "This people," saith the prophet Jeremiah, "hath committed two evils." What are they? "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." {Jer.2:13}

What is that fountain of living waters? Christ is the fountain

18 That is, to make peace with God for his soul, since Christ is the Peace-maker, Saviour, and Justifier; otherwise to be kept in these things contributes to spiritual peace of mind, under the influence of divine grace and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. Gill

of peace and life; and men forsake that peace that is to be had in Christ, when they would have peace out of righteousness of their own, out of their great enlargements, out of humiliations. These are broken cisterns, and what peace is there in them? Is there not sinfulness in them? Who can say, I have washed my hands? If there be sinfulness in them, where then is their peace? Sin speaks nothing but war to the soul. Let me tell you, beloved, you that look after peace from the subduing of your sins; what peace can it afford you, in case there be any defects of subduing of your sins? There can be no peace!

Suppose God had nothing in the world to charge upon you; but only that sinfulness in the very subduing of your corruptions; what peace could you have? What could but God find in us? Suppose your eyes were enlightened to see yourselves, how much filthiness there is in all your wrestlings; I say, how much defects and infirmities might you see? Could you choose but fall foul upon your own spirits, for these infirmities and defects of your best performances, seeing the wages of sin is death? What can you run to then? None but Christ, none but Christ. While your acts, in respect of filthiness, proclaim nothing but war, Christ alone, and his blood, proclaim nothing but peace. Therefore I give this hint by the way, when I speak of the power of Christ subduing sin; because, from the power of it in men, they are apt to think their peace depends upon this subduing of sin. If their sins be subdued, then they may have peace; and if they cannot be subdued, then no peace. Fetch peace where it is to be had; let subduing of sin alone for peace; let Christ have that which is his due; for it is he alone that speaks peace.[19] It remains, we should

19 Let it be observed, that the Doctor is speaking not of subduing sin, as it is an act of God's grace, and owing to the power of Christ, who has made an end of it, and so made peace; on this subduing of sin peace depends, {Mic.7:18, Deut.9:24} but of men's subduing sin, by their own power and strength, and in order to make peace with God; whereas subduing sin, or mortifying the deeds of the body, believers are concerned for, is not of themselves, and done in their own strength, but through the Spirit, Power and Grace of God; and not to make peace with him, but to show their dislike of sin, their gratitude to God, and that they are debtors to him, to live after the spirit, {Rom.8:12,13,} wherefore subduing of sin is to be let alone for the end mentioned, in order to peace with God, that Christ might have his due and glory, who has both made and speaks peace; otherwise subduing of sin, or the

speak further, that as Christ is a way from sin, both in respect of fault and power, so he is a way from wrath; and he is a way to the grace and glory of the Father, and what kind of way he is. But the searching into every corner of this truth, for the sitting of it, hath brought me exceedingly back beyond my expectation. I shall have further occasion in the afternoon to speak of it.

Ii Christ The Only Way {2}

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6}

Now we go on; Christ, as he is the way from sin, so he is the way from wrath; and indeed, must be the way from wrath, when he is the way from sin; wrath is but the wages of sin, the effect wrought by sin. Take away the cause, and the effect dies; destroy the root, and the branches wither of themselves. Man's sin is the root of wrath; when sin is destroyed and abolished, wrath must needs sink and perish. Christ is so the way from wrath, that all that receive him are wholly discharged, both from God's affection of wrath, {as I may so speak,} and from the effects of that affection of his. Wrath is considered in these two respects; First, simply, as the displeasure of God itself; the offence that God takes; Secondly, in the fruits of this offence, that he manifests in the expression of his indignation and displeasure. Christ is the way, the only way, the effectual and infallible way, from all this wrath, to all that do receive him.

First, from the affection itself of wrath. Let me tell you, beloved, {I would to God you could receive it according to the manifest evidence of Scripture,} that God no longer stands offended, nor displeased; though a believer, after he be a believer, sins often.[20] Yet, I say, God no longer stands offended and

weakening the power of it, by the Spirit and Grace of God, is the concern of every believer, and is wished for by him, and makes for the tranquility of his mind. Gill.

20 As every believer does, and yet God is not offended with him; the meaning is not, that his sin is not offensive to God; it is in its own nature being contrary to the nature of God, as the Doctor in a following page observes, and where he also distinguishes between God's being offended with the sins of believers, and with their persons; and it is in this latter sense he is to be understood here; for God loves them with an everlasting love, and has no fury in him towards them; and besides all their sins are fully satisfied for by Christ who thereby has took away all cause of offence, that is,

displeased with him, when he has once received Christ; and unto them, saith God, "Fury is not in me." {Isa.27:4} And in Isaiah 53:5, {among many other notable expressions of God's being well-pleased towards poor sinners through Christ,} he saith, "He was wounded for their transgressions;" and then you have this admirable expression of the effect of his wounding, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" satisfied, here, is as much as pacified; they are all one. The travail of the soul of Christ makes God such amends for the sinfulness of believers that he can no longer stand offended and displeased with them. If God doth remain offended with them, there is yet some of their sinfulness remaining to be taken away, that this offence also may be taken away. All their sins must be taken away from them, and all offences will be removed from them. But, except God will be offended, where there is no cause to be offended, {which is blasphemy to speak,} he will not be offended with believers. For I say he hath no cause to be offended with a believer, because he doth not find the sin of the believer to be the believer's own sin, but he finds it the sin of Christ.[21]

He was made sin for us; God laid the iniquities of us all upon him. The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin; He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; and if he bear our sins, he must bear the displeasure for them; nay, he did bear the displeasure, the indignation of the Lord; and if he did bear the indignation of the Lord; either he did bear all, or but part; if he did not bear all the indignation of the Lord, then he doth not "save to the uttermost those that come to God by him;" as he is said to do. {Heb.7:25} I say, not to the uttermost, because here is some offence, some indignation, left behind; and for lack of taking this indignation

sin. So the very learned Witsius, referring to this passage of the Doctor's, observes, he is to be understood in respect of that most full reconciliation which Christ has obtained, and which is adjudged to believers in justification. Gill

21 Being imputed to him, and atoned for by him; and so the offence by it, to the justice of God, is ceased, having an ample satisfaction. So the above mentioned judicious professor Witsius gives the sense of the passage. "God is not offended without a cause, there is no cause of offence but sin; Christ has borne and taken away all the sins of believers, and the most just offence of God for them; and not only some part of the offence, but all, all entirely, therefore there remains none that lies upon believers; to these God says, "Fury is not in me." Is.27:4. Gill.

upon himself, it falls upon believers. So that, either you must say, Christ is an imperfect Saviour, and hath left some scattering of wrath behind, that will light upon the head of the believer; or else you will say, he is a perfect Saviour, and takes away all displeasure of God; then there remains none of it upon the person of a believer. Beloved, for my part, I understand not what clouds are in the mind and judgment of other men; to me it seems, there is no truth more abundantly cleared, in all the Scriptures, than this one truth of the transferring of our sins, and so the offence for them, wholly upon the Person of Christ; and thus a poor soul hath rest from the indignation of God, as Christ takes the burden off from his shoulders. There is a twofold burden; first, in sin itself; and secondly, in the indignation of God for it. Who can bear this indignation of the Lord? Christ alone and he hath borne it.

Yes, but you will say, is not God offended at the sins of believers, when they do commit them? Hath Christ taken away the offence against sin by his death? I answer, No; therefore do not mistake yourself; for there may be easily a mistake for lack of serious pondering the words I deliver. I have not said, God is not offended with the sins that believers commit; but that God stands not offended with the persons of believers, {Jonah 4:6; I Kings 9:4,5,} but for the sins committed by them. He hath that everlasting indignation against sin as ever. And as there is the same contrariety in sin against his nature, so there is the same contrariety in God's nature unto sin. All contrarieties have a mutual contrariety against each other; as water is contrary to fire, so fire is contrary to water; as sin is contrary to the nature of God; so the nature of God is contrary to sin; there is an abhorrency of God to that sinfulness, but not an offence in God to the person that commits that sin; because the offence of God for that sin hath spent itself upon the Person of Christ; and, by having so spent itself, there remains none of it to light upon the person of a believer; Christ having borne all this offence for sin. And therefore, as I said before, either grant that Christ hath satisfied the Father, that the Father is pleased in his Beloved Son, according to Christ's own speech; either grant this, or say, Christ hath not done all. In

Matthew, the 3rd chapter, is heard a voice from heaven, at the baptizing of Christ, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He doth not say, with whom I am well pleased, but in whom I am well pleased; that is, in whom I am well pleased, with you. Though in our natures, and in the sinfulness of them, there is matter of displeasure, yet in Christ, for all this, God is well pleased with us. And yet there is none of God's indignation against sin lost in all this, because he is not offended at all with the believer; for he hath satisfied his own offence in his Son more fully than he would have satisfied it in our own persons; for we must have been everlastingly suffering, before God would have been fully satisfied. Now therefore, as the payment of a great sum all at one payment, and at a day, is a better payment, than by a penny a year, till a thousand years be out, mark what I say; so Christ's satisfying the Father at once, by one sacrifice of himself, is a better satisfying of him, than if we should have been infinite days in paying that which his justice requires, and his indignation to sin doth expect. So here is no derogation to the loathsome nature of sin, and the purity of God, and the great offence God takes at sin; but only here is the transaction of it from the person of a believer, to the Person of Christ himself, that willingly took this upon him; and not only did he take it upon him, but it was according to the determinate counsel and purpose of God that he should do it; nay, the pleasure of God, for "it pleased the LORD to bruise Him." {Is.53:10} So much briefly for the affection of wrath, and how much Christ is a way to take away that affection of God's wrath; that is, wrath simple, as it is an offence from him to a believer.

Secondly, Christ is a way to take away the effect of God's displeasure; Christ is the only way to take it away. "Shall I give the fruit of my body," saith the prophet, {Micah 6:7,} "for the sin of my soul? Thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil?" No, alas; this will not buy out the penance of one sin, when he hath sinned; it is all too mean a price; there must be a better to take away that wrath; that is, the heavy punishment of God from a believer. I say a better price than this; not a dearer price to us

poor men, but yet a more clear and acceptable price unto God; a price, in its nature, infinite and invaluable; but, of this price, not a farthing goes out of our purse; there is the greatness. Christ is a way to take away all wrath in respect of the heavy hand of God, which is the fruit of man's sin. In brief, beloved, the sum plainly is this, Christ is so the way from wrath, that God doth never punish any believer, after he is a believer, for sin; I say, God doth not punish for sin.[22] This seems to be a harsh proposition to many; but give me leave to clear what I say; and so, according to the clear evidence of truth, reject or receive what I deliver to you. In Isaiah 53, a chapter of most admirable excellency to set forth the wonderful and incomprehensible benefit of Christ; observe that Christ "was wounded for our transgressions;" mark the punishment; "He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed." Now beloved, I will ask but this question: Are the wounds of Christ only part of the punishment? Or, are they the whole of our punishment? The bruisings of Christ, were they to be part of the punishment our sins deserved? If they were but part, we must bear the rest ourselves; but then, we must be co-saviours with Christ, co-bearers of indignation and wrath. "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." {Is.63:3} No creature in the world was able to be a helper with him.

I speak of believers only; they do not bear one lash of that deserved wrath that is poured out for sin, not one lash or stroke; for Christ trod it alone himself. Yea, but you will say unto me, does not God afflict his children and believers? All the world seeth and

22 The reason is, because the whole punishment, due to his sins, has been borne by Christ, his surety for him; and to inflict punishment twice for the same sins, once upon the surety, and again upon the believer, is contrary to the justice of God, as well as derogatory to the satisfaction of Christ; for either he has borne the whole of punishment, or only a part; if the whole, which is the truth, then none can he laid upon the believer; but, if only a part, Christ's satisfaction is not complete, and then the believer must be a co-bearer and co-saviour with Christ, as the Doctor observes; neither of which ought to be said. Gill.

knoweth he doth; therefore, why speak you against this? Beloved, give me leave to ask you; is there not a great deal of difference between God's afflicting believers, and punishing believers for sin? Yea, but are not the afflictions of believers for sin? I answer, No; afflictions are unto believers from sin, but not for sin.[23] What is the meaning of that, you will say? God, in afflicting believers, doth not intend to punish them, as now laying on them the desert of their sin, for that is laid upon Christ alone; but he doth afflict them in part to be a help to preserve them from sin; I say, all afflictions to believers are to keep them from sin, rather than punishment unto them for sin. Yet, some will say, no men in the world are afflicted, but their afflictions are for sin. I answer, Yea, there are that have been. The disciples put a question to Christ concerning the man that was born blind; "Whether did this man sin, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Saith Christ to them, "Neither he nor his parents;" not that neither of them had sinned, but that neither he, nor his parents had any sin, as a cause of that affliction or trial upon him; but that the power of God might be seen in him. So God, afflicting a believer, hath no respect unto sin, as if he did afflict for sin. For my own part, I cannot see how a man can say that Christ bore all the punishment of sin, if we bear any of it ourselves. And, if Christ did not bear it all, I cannot see how Christ can be a sufficient Saviour without some other to help him out, in that which he himself did not bear. I speak all this, beloved, the rather because when poor believers are crossed and afflicted in any way, they are presently ready to suspect that God hath cast them off for their sins, and is angry with them for sinning against him. I say, in respect of sin he hath committed, which he thus suspects, there is not the least drop of the displeasure of God, not the fruit of such displeasure comes near him. "But every son whom I love, I rebuke and chasten," saith the Lord. God seeth that afflictions will purge, and so therefore he sends them. The father gives not his child a purge to make him sick, but to take away

23 That is, they are not punishments for sins, or are in a way of vindictive wrath for them; but they are in love, and for the good of God's people; they are fatherly chastisements for sins, in order to take them away, or purge them from them, or prevent them, or preserve from them, as the Doctor afterwards explains himself. Gill

some bad humours that made him sick, and for the prevention of disease, or for the removal of some disease; that is the father's end in purging the child. And this is the end why God afflicts his people; not for their sins, but to take them away; {Is.27:9;} that is, to prevent the hastiness and inconsiderateness of a believer, that he may not be so rash, running headstrong in his own ways, but may be the more considerate for the time to come. It is most certainly true beloved, that as soon as ever a person is a believer, he is so ingratiated into God, and with him, that there is nothing in the world from that instant, unto a believer, but mercy. God managing his mercy in his own way for the best to his; sometimes by the rod, as well as by sweet-meats; but still he runs in a way of mercy. "All things shall work together for good;" this is God's way to believers. And if this could but be received of them; and that even then, when they are gold cast into the fire, that God, all that time they are in the fire, as the prophet Malachi speaks, sits "as a refiner;" then they would be more quiet in the expectation of that purity, in which they shall come forth, when the time of their coming forth is; when you see the refiner cast his gold into the furnace, do you think he is angry with the gold, and means to cast it away? No, he sits as a refiner; that is, he stands carefully over the fire, and over the gold, and looks unto it, that not one grain be lost; and when the dross is severed, he will out with it presently, it shall be no longer there. Even so Christ sits as a refiner; when once his gold shall have its dross severed, then he takes out his gold, and it becomes as gold seven times purified in the fire. But still, I say, as a fruit of wrath, God never doth punish, or afflict, or chastise; {which word you may rather use, because it is the ordinary phrase of the gospel.} "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." {Rev.3:19}

In brief, Christ is the way from wrath, not only in respect of the present, but also in respect of the future; I mean a way from everlasting damnation. Give me a believer that hath set his footing truly in Christ, and he blasphemes Christ that dares serve a writ of damnation upon that person. Suppose a believe be overtaken in a gross sin, it is a desperate thing, in any man, so much as to serve a

writ of damnation upon this believer; it is absolutely to frustrate, and make void the Mediatorship and Saviourship of Christ, to say that any believer {though he be fallen by infirmity} is in the estate of damnation. {Jn.5:24, I Thes.1:10, Rom.8:38,39} And I say unto thee, thyself, whoever thou art, that thou art ready to charge damnation upon thyself, when thou art overtaken; thou doest the greatest injury to the Lord Jesus Christ that can be; for in it thou directly overthrowest the fulness of the grace of Christ, and the fulness of the Satisfaction of Christ to the Father. Art thou a believer, and yet art thou in danger of damnation? Wherefore hath Christ suffered? Hath he died in vain? If he hath not died in vain, but hath borne thy damnation, how shall he pour forth this damnation upon thee again, unless he be unjust; which is blasphemy to speak.

But you will say this is presumption; then may a man go on, and do what he list, there is no fear of damnation; this is the way to take the bridle from men, and make them kick up their heels as the wild asses upon the mountains. I answer, it is true, were a man to be guided by himself, and to order his own way, according to the pleasure of his own will; but, beloved, you must know, that the same Christ that hath borne the wrath of the Father, and the effects thereof, doth free poor sinners from damnation; the same Christ takes as strict an order, to restrain and keep in the spirits of a man, as to save that man. Beloved, although a wild ass, being loose, runs at random, yet this ass may be taken, and so tamed, that he may be set as loose as he was before; yet he will not run as unruly as he did before, by virtue of his being tamed. It is true, our natures themselves are mad; and, if they had the reins, would run wild; but you must know, that Christ breaks this wildness, and then he dare let a believer loose to that, in respect of which, an unbeliever, a wicked man, would take advantage to sin. The Lord discourses of Ephraim; “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; {Jer.31:18,19;} here is a wild bull, an unruly creature. You may be sure Ephraim was thus; yet God hampers Ephraim well enough for all this; “Convert thou

me, and I shall be converted." "Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded" within myself. Mark you, I pray, now let Ephraim loose; alas! Ephraim is ashamed. Ephraim would blush to look after that which he was mad after before; he is confounded within himself; he cannot tell which way to stir now, as before. Christ doth break the spirits of him; so that there is not now the licentiousness in him, through the power of Christ, which was naturally in him, till the power of Christ came upon him.

Why must not hell and damnation be a bridle to keep men in, will you say? I answer, marks what the Psalmist speaks, "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." {Psa.110:3} Here you see how tame the people of Christ are. Thy people are a willing people. How so? By fear of damnation? No such thing. But in the day of thy power, and in the beauty of holiness, they shall be a willing people. First, the power of Christ comes over a person, that frames his spirit to a willingness and aptness; then comes the beauty of holiness, that wins, persuades, allures, and draws them to willingness; and where there is a willing spirit to walk with Christ, there is no danger of taking liberty. The philosophers observe a rule, that the will is not compelled; a man cannot constrain his will. Let the will of a person but be to the pleasure of Christ, nothing can constrain him to go beyond Christ; he may haply be overreached, and be over-taken, but he will never break loose; he will never run away, though the gate stands open on every side. The brass and pasture are so sweet that Christ hath put a believer into; that though there be no bounds to keep in such a soul, yet it will never go out {I Pet.1:5} of this fat pasture, to feed in a barren common. Therefore, in answer to the objectors, who naturally think there is a way open to such licentiousness, by taking away all wrath from a believer, and that therefore he will break out into all manner of excess, I tell you, the power of Christ restrains him. Thus I have dispatched the second thing, from whence Christ is the way; he is the way from sin and wrath; wrath in the affection, wrath in the effects of it.

I come now, in the next place, to consider how Christ is the way, not only from sin and wrath, but the way, and the only way, to grace and glory. Grace, in scripture, admits of a double acceptation, proper and improper. We usually take grace for that which is improperly grace; for we commonly call grace those divine qualities and virtues, and holy dispositions and actions, wherewith we are possessed, by which we do improve and employ ourselves in the world. This we usually call grace; and in some sense, it is grace; but that which is most properly grace, is nothing else but merely favour and bounty, and loving kindness itself; and so, consequently, all sanctification is not, so properly grace itself, as the fruit of grace. God first casts his favour and loving-kindness upon a person, then out of his favour flow the several fruits of his loving-kindness; and the fruits are those fruits of the Spirit, frequently mentioned by the Apostle. Now Christ is a way to grace in both these respects; Christ is a way to favour and lovingkindness in God; Christ is a way to all fruits or graces, as you call them.

Christ is a way to loving-kindness itself, and the favour of God; this, loving-kindness and favour of God, consists in these branches; first, in a willing reconciliation of God, unto an alienated creature. A person is then said to be received into grace, when he hath been cast off, and forbidden to come near; as when princes cast men out of their favour, they confine them, and remove them from them, that they shall not be near the court; now when princes are pleased to cast a fresh aspect upon those persons again, and so call them to court, and to be friends with them, this is properly grace. So beloved, after God seems to have cast off a person, and to put him far off from himself, and to remove him out of his sight, to confine him from coming near him; when he will return to him again, and will show him the light of his countenance, that he did formerly hide, this is properly favour. The Apostle, you shall find, doth expressly mention this Reconciliation of God, and ascribes this grace merely unto Christ alone, "Ye who were sometimes afar off," mark but the expression, "hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ;" {Eph.2:13;} here you see the ingratiating reconciliation

by the blood of Christ. "God was in Christ," saith the Apostle, "reconciling the world unto himself; not imputing their trespasses unto them;" {II Cor.5:19;} in Christ reconciling, and therefore "Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant." {Heb.8:6} Nay the Apostle tells us expressly, that Christ is the only Mediator, and there is no other to reconcile men to God, but Christ alone. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." {I Tim.2:5} So, we see plainly, to be at peace with God, there must be only the Lord Jesus Christ that must make peace; he himself is the way.

I remember a passage in Job, when there seemed to be a variance between God and him; first, Job tugs at a pitiful stand, "I cannot answer him," saith, Job, speaking of God; why so? For there is no "daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both;" {Job 9:33;} as much as to say, there is no hope of agreement with God, till another interpose himself, and be a daysman; that is, hath power over us both. Such effectual umpires between men are indifferent, and have both parties in difference in their power, to command the one, and the other; to command the creditor to yield and to prevail with the debtor to pay as much as he is able; and this umpire is Christ alone.

There are many other expressions of God's grace; of his loving-kindness and favour, and it is plain, throughout the whole scripture, that Christ is the only way to all. As to that adoption that the Apostle speaks of, {when he breaks out into admiration} saying, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" {I Jn.3:1} "Is it a small matter to you" {saith David, speaking to some of the servants of Saul, persuading him to marry the king's daughter} "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in Law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?" {I Sam.18:23} So say I to you, "Is it a small matter to you to be the sons of God?" Oh; what great love! But this great grace and favour is only by Jesus Christ. In Galatians 4:4,5, it is plainly Christ that brings this grace of adoption, to make us sons. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,

made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Here you see, all that Christ doth is to this end; that at length, through that he hath done, we might receive the adoption of sons. As Christ is a way unto the pure grace, and mere favour, and loving-kindness of God; so also unto all the fruits of grace, all the manifestations of it in the expression of God's loving-kindness in the fruits of the Spirit.

To give you some instances; the first of all these kinds of the grace of God, that he doth ever bestow upon a person is the opening of his eyes to see himself filthy and to see what he is; here begins a closing with Christ, to see a need of him, and to see the usefulness of him being received. Now mark this great business, of the opening of the eyes of a person, and you shall see that Christ is a way unto it; {Isa.42:6-8;} there the Father doth treat with Christ, and in his treaty he speaks thus to him, I will "give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." You see that it is Christ that must open the blind eyes of men. Beloved, men are mistaken that think that the Law makes them to see their own vileness; for a gracious sight of our vileness is the only work of Christ. The Law is a looking-glass that is able to represent the filthiness of a person; but the Law gives not eyes to see that filthiness; bring a looking-glass and set it before a blind man, he seeth no more spots in his face, than if he had none at all; though the glass be a good glass, yet the glass cannot give eyes; yet, if he had eyes, the glass might represent his filthiness. The Apostle James compares the Law to a looking-glass and that is all the Law can do; to have a faculty to represent; but it doth not give a faculty to see what it doth represent; it is Christ alone that doth open the eyes of men, to behold their own vileness and filthiness; and when Christ will open the eyes, then a man shall see himself what he is.

Secondly, repentance is a great grace; yet you shall find, beloved, {Acts 5:31,} that it is exclusively the work of Christ to give repentance unto men; for God hath exalted him to be a

Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel. It is Christ that grants repentance unto life; and if ever you will repent, with a Gospel Repentance, either you must fetch it from Christ, he must be the way, or you must go without it.

Faith is a grace of graces, the root of all graces to believers, and this is properly Christ and none but Christ, that works faith in a believer; the Apostle speaks this expressly. "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith." {Heb.12:2} Christ is the Author, it is he that begets it.

Thirdly; consider the whole spiritual life; for Christ is the only way to all spiritual life whatsoever. "I live," {saith Paul} "yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." There is no life, but as Christ lives in men. Whence is the natural life of man? It is from the soul; the soul once separated from the body, is dead; so long as the soul is united to the body, the man is alive. Christ is the life of every believing soul; Christ is he that frames and gives life to men. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." {Eph.2:1} Christ it is that quickens men when they are dead in trespasses and sins. And in John 5:25, you have this admirable expression, "the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." There is no life but by Christ alone; he is the way to all spiritual life whatsoever. So in brief, beloved, there is not a scrap {as you may say} pertaining to a Christian, but it comes from Christ alone.

Fourthly, God hath therefore filled Christ full of all things that we might fetch all from him. The Apostle tells us expressly, "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." John, in the first chapter of his Gospel, tells us to what purpose he was "full of grace and truth," saying, "and of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace." The Psalmist, {Ps.68:18,} hath this expression, "thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." The Apostle, quoting that text, turns the words thus; "wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive,

and gave gifts unto men;" {Eph.4:8;} it is as much as to say, that God bequeathed as much to Christ, as shall serve for his body; and this he distributes to the body, according to the proportionable need of it. The head is first the fountain, and hath all animal spirits planted in it; then doth it from itself derive all those animal spirits to every part, from whence all have their several motions. So that, I say, the supply of all the believer's wants concerning grace, be it in matters of mortification of sin; be it in the performance of duties of piety, mercy, and justice, or any other whatsoever; the supply of all must come from Christ alone, as he speaks himself. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." {Rev.1:8} The beginning and the end of all things. "All my springs" {saith the Psalmist, Ps.87:7;} "are in thee." He speaks of Christ in the name of God, as if God spake to Christ his Son; "all my springs are in thee;" therefore you shall find God always dealing with men, as Pharaoh dealt in Egypt with his own people; they came complaining of their wants to Pharaoh; "Go to Joseph," {saith Pharaoh} "hear what he saith;" he turns all over to Joseph. Thus doth God deal with men; "this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him;" with God the Father; therefore, Christ saith, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" so that Christ is Judge alone; as Christ will dispose of all things, so his Father sets to his seal, and underwrites his hand, and never examines what Christ doth; but every deed that is signed by Christ, the Father without any more ado, seals it, and manages all things by the hand of Christ; therefore, Christ saith, in the last of Matthew, "All power is given unto me, both in heaven and in earth." The Father made all over to him, everything. The truth is, beloved, the Godhead is absolutely a Being of itself, {Deut.6:4,} but this Godhead was pleased to unite the humanity to itself, and the Godhead having the humanity united to it, is one person.[24] Thus it pleased Christ to manage all things in the world, not in the Godhead alone, but as the Godhead hath the manhood united to it. You must not

24 That is, the Godhead, as subsisting in the Son of God, is a Person of itself, and taking the humanity into union with it, both became one person. Gill

conceive, when God makes over the managing of things to Christ that he sits still. But the Godhead hath now the manhood united to itself; so it is Christ, God and man; that works together; and, by this kind of way, there is nearer and better access for us unto God; because here is an humanity that is of some relation unto us, and so of near acquaintance with us. The Godhead in its simple nature is of too remote a distance for us to come near.

Fifthly, moreover, Christ is not only a way to grace, but the increasing of it is in Christ. The Apostle {Col.2:10} tells us, that "we are complete in him, who is the head of the body, the head of all principalities;" not only that we have substance and being, but that we are complete in him; and, in the latter end of the chapter, the Apostle follows the allusion of the head and body, and saith, that the parts "having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." {Col.2:19} When the parts are united to the head, and the head, through the veins and nerves conveys nourishment to those parts, then the parts not only live, but increase with the increase of God. The Apostle, {I Pet.2:4,5} saith, "to whom coming, as unto a living stone," {speaking to believers,} "ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." He doth not say, stones that have life, but "lively stones;" they have more than bare life; nay, further, as lively stones are built up together. There is a growing up by the power of Christ, in coming to the "living-stone," as the Apostle doth there call Christ.

And that is not all neither; for we have not only growth by the grace of Christ, but restoration {Ps.23:3,} and recovery in case of relapse. Suppose a believer fall, the same Christ that gave him life, and set him upon his legs, must raise him up again when he is down. "Though I fall, yet shall I not be cast down," saith he; that is, I shall not be left, but shall be raised again. "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." {Is.35:10} They shall return to Zion; they were of Zion before; a man is not

said to return, except he were in the place before, and so is coming again; so the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion. How? They are ransomed of the Lord; for it is the ransom of Christ that brings them back from bondage to their Zion again; and when he brings them back, he brings them back "with everlasting joy upon their heads;" they obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing fly away.

Thus I have endeavored to declare the main thing, in what kind of way Christ is a way from a state of sin and wrath, to a state of grace. I should have further considered what kind of way Christ is, and upon what grounds Christ is become such a way as he is; but I consider the season; I shall not therefore trespass upon your patience, though my fingers itch to be dealing in that which remains. There is an abundance of excellency behind. Christ is a free way; Christ is a near way; Christ is a way of quick riddance of all business you have to do in the way; Christ is a firm way, for there is no fear of sinking; Christ is a satisfying and pleasant way. All his "ways are ways of pleasantness." {Pv.3:17} Christ is a safe way, there is a continual guard and conduct in that way; Christ is an easy way to hit; "way-faring men, though fools," {saith Isaiah} "shall not err therein." Christ is a spacious way, "thou hast set my feet in a large room," saith David. Now all this is founded upon the good pleasure of God; who will have Christ to be the way; it is founded upon the interest that Christ hath in God; it is founded upon the purchase of Christ that hath bought this for man; it is likewise founded upon the conquest of Christ, as he makes his own way, and beats all off that keeps thee from finding this way; and it is founded, lastly, upon his bowels to the sons of men, that can never pass over the gulch, till he hath made himself a bridge for them. These things I should have showed you by setting forth the excellency of this Way; but of these hereafter.

Iii Christ The Only Way {3}

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6}

I have a word or two to speak more fully, if possible it may be, to satisfy such as are not fully resolved in the things I formerly delivered. Christ, I said, is the way from wrath, from the wrath of the Father; from wrath in its affection, {as I may so speak;} from wrath in the fruits of this affection of wrath. I delivered this position indeed; that 'the punishment, or the rod of God, or rather chastisement, is not for sin, but from sin." Some stumble at the expression, peradventure through mistake. In brief therefore, beloved, to clear both myself and your judgments, if it be possible; when I say that believers are not afflicted for sin, I mean thus; God, when he afflicts a believer, he hath not an eye to the desert of his sin, and there upon doth lay part of this desert upon his back; for Christ hath borne the whole desert of sin upon his own back. Whatsoever desert of sin the believer doth bear, Christ did not bear it, or else God takes satisfaction twice for one thing. Mark it well, I pray, beloved, if the Lord will scourge a believer, as now pouring out upon him what his transgressions hath deserved, wherefore did Christ die? Christ died to satisfy for the fault of sin; and, in his death, God was actually satisfied, as you shall find it in Isaiah 53. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied' by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." {vs.11} With what was he satisfied? He was satisfied with "the travail of his soul;" with the burden his soul bare, with the punishment of sin that was upon him. If God was satisfied with the "travail of his soul," how can God come to exact a new satisfaction by pouring out his wrath for sin upon believers? To be satisfied, and to ask more is a contradiction; for either he was not satisfied, or, being satisfied, he could ask no more. In brief therefore, beloved, consider thus much, there is not the least action, or rather intention of any revenge, for a sin committed, when the Lord in any kind afflicts his people; all the revenge that sin deserves, Christ hath taken away and hath borne it upon his own back; and therefore, he is said to "save to the uttermost {Heb.7:25,} them that come to God by him." He saves to the utmost, saith the Apostle; he hath not left a dram, nor a jot behind, not so much as the least

scatterings of wrath to light upon the head of a believer, for whose sake he bare the indignation of the Lord. Whereupon the very nature of affliction in general is altered and changed; as death in particular; it was the wages of sin at first; it is become the bed of rest now. "They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness," {Is.57:2,} saith the prophet. Afflictions were the rod of God's anger; they are now the gentle purges of a tender Father. God heretofore afflicted for sin, now God afflicts men from sin. "This is all the fruit," saith the prophet, "to take away his sin;" {Is.27:9;} not to take away the present sin, as if affliction did make an end, and so blot out transgression; this doth directly strike at the heart of Christ himself.[25] But "this is all the fruit to take away sin," that is, to break off sin, to prevent sin. "Before I was afflicted {saith David} I went astray, but now have I learned to keep thy Law;" therefore, {saith he} "it is good for me that I have been afflicted;" in this regard, because of prevention. {Ps.119:71}

If you will but carry it clearly without carping, or a spirit that seeks contention and quarrelling, you never need to stumble at such a position as this; for afflictions are the smiles of God, as gracious as the choicest embraces. God never manifests a loving stroking of a soul, more than he doth, when he afflicts it, to make his love appear in these afflictions. And the truth is, as Christ has purchased rest and peace for believers, so he hath likewise purchased afflictions for them too; the wisdom of God seeing afflictions as useful as dandlings themselves; but still, I say, this remains firm, that Christ is a way from all wrath whatsoever, as it is the manifestation of God's displeasure unto the creatures sinning; and thereby pouring out the desert of this sinfulness, or the fruit of the desert of this sinfulness, upon them; Christ is a way to the state of grace; grace in respect of favour, grace in respect of the fruits thereof; and this we have dispatched.

The next thing under consideration is, what kind of way

25 For it is Christ's work to take every present sin from off the conscience of the believer, by the application of his blood and sacrifice; hence he is said to be "the Lamb of God that taketh away," that continues to take away, "the sins of the world." Gill

Christ is to those that come to the Father by him? I shall speak as briefly as possible I may. Take notice, in general, that the Lord hath laid out Christ as a way, with all the possible conveniences that may either win a people into this way, or satisfy and refresh a people that are in this way. {Cant.5:1} The Lord hath so furnished Christ, the way, with all possible accommodations, as there cannot be devised what the heart of man himself can desire; but he shall find it in this way, Christ; so that all I shall speak of this subject is, that as it may give abundance of light, so you may apply it all along, by way of motive to stir you up, to quicken you to set footing into this way, in respect of those several conveniences that do accompany it.

In the first place, there is this great and ineffable excellency and accommodation in Christ, the way, that he is a free way for all comers to enter into, without any cause of fear, that they shall trespass by entering; for Christ is a free way, I say; a way that costs nothing; a way barred up to no person whatsoever; a way whose gates are cast off from the hinges; nay, rather, a way that hath no gates at all unto it; a cheap way to us, but a costly way indeed unto the Father, and to Christ too. O beloved; a man might study a while to find out, whether there be more preciousness in Christ himself, as he is our way, or in the fitting of Christ to be our way. The Person of Christ is invaluable, there is nothing to be compared with him; but considering him as our way to salvation, whether there be more preciousness in that, or in the fitting of him for it, is not so easy to determine. Ye are bought with a price; {saith the Apostle;} not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." {I Pet.1:18,19} Observe it, I pray, that Christ might be a fit way for us to the Father, it cost the Father and Christ himself that in comparison of which, silver and gold, and the most precious things in the world, are called but corruptible things; which makes the Apostle break out into a way of expostulation and admiration, rather than into a way of affirmation. Oh behold, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." {I

Jn.3:1} Greater love than this can no man show, than to lay down his life for his enemies. What did it cost the Father? It cost him that which was most precious to him of all things in the world; it cost him his own Son, not a cessation of the being of his Son, but the bitterness of his Son; though a man doth not lose his child, yet it goes to his heart to see his child tormented; much more when he himself must be forced to be the tormentor. Abraham thought God put him hard to it, when he must be the butcher, to slay his own and only son, his dear Isaac. God, the Father, was put to it as much, nay, much more; for in Abraham the thing was but offered, God would not have him do it actually; yet it went to his heart that he should be appointed to do it; but it would have cut his heart severely if he had actually done it, if he had cut the throat of Isaac. If nothing could content him before he had a child, {"what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless,"} what would Abraham have said, if receiving a child, he should have been made a butcher to his own child? Yet the Father was put to this, to make Christ a way to believers. Christ was his only beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. {Mt.3:17} "I was daily his delight, {speaking of the Father and Christ under the notion, wisdom} rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth." {Pv.8:30,31} Must it not come near unto him to part with such a Son? Nay, must it not go near to him that he himself must not only be a spectator of all that cruelty, but the principal actor himself in the tragedy? He doth not leave Christ to men, but when men could not fetch blood enough, he takes the rod into his own hand, and will fetch it himself from his beloved Son. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." {Is.53:10} It did not only please the Lord that men should bruise him; but "it pleased the Lord" himself "to bruise him." It was a strange apprehension, that God should look upon the anguish of the soul of Christ, and, instead of breaking out into furiousness against the instruments of cruelty, he himself should be satisfied with beholding it; as much

as to say, it did his heart good to see it. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" not only satisfied towards men, but satisfied himself; it gave him content to see the travail of his Son.

Certainly, beloved, the bowels of God must infinitely be beyond the reach of the creature, towards a poor sinner, that he could go so far in a contrary way to his own Son; that there might be the fruit of these bowels to his enemies. One would think, God should rejoice to see the confusion of his enemies; and not rejoice to see the bitterness of the travail of the soul of his Son, that his enemies might escape scot-free; but this it cost the Father; he must not only behold, or allow the suffering Of his Son, but he must be an actor of it himself; nay, he must be pleased in it. Certainly, the Father was exceedingly pleased with it, because it doth commend the great end of the Father; for the main end he drove at was the salvation of sinners; and this, in his infinite wisdom, he saw the fittest way; that it could not be done, but by this way; therefore it pleased him, in that his purpose should not be frustrated of his end. You know, when a man hath a great mind to a thing, if the way he goes in prospers not, he is displeased; if it prosper, he is contented in it, he delights to see his business succeed; so was it with the Father.

You may see what it cost Christ too, as well as the Father; the Father must resign his part in his Son; a great matter, not only to part with him, in respect of death, but in a manner to part with him in life too; "My God, my God, {saith Christ} why hast thou forsaken me?" Here, you see, God parts with him in life; and Christ must part with his life, as well as the Father must part with the Son; nay, in some manner, Christ must part with that which is better than his life, with the glory and majesty of his Divinity. He did not part with the essence of his Divinity, but with the glory thereof; as Phil.2:6-8, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Christ did empty himself, as the meaning

of the word is; he did put off and lay aside the majesty and glory he had, that he might seem to be a mere Carpenter's Son. For a king all his life-time to undergo the notion of a beggar, and not to recover out of this estate all his whole life, but even to lie down in this low condition in the grave, it would seem a great loss unto him; man would reckon this a great matter, for a king to debase himself so low; yet it cost Christ more than this; for look upon all the sufferings of Christ; look upon death itself, together with the reproach and shame thereof. The death he died, was called "a cursed death of the cross;" although he was not ashamed, that is, he despised the shame; yet shame and reproach he must bear. So, if we look upon God and Christ as making a way for men, it is not a free way, it is not a cheap way, but looking upon ourselves, that have received the benefit of this way, and this Christ, it is a free way indeed, free for man without any cost or charge; free, as he is a way to all sorts of men, none excepted, none prohibited; whoever will, may set footing in Christ. There is nothing can bar one person more than another from entering into Christ as a way. I know beloved, that this seems harsh to the ears of some people, that there is no difference to be made among men, not only poor, as well as rich, but that the wicked, as well as godly, are admitted; that is strange. But let me tell you, Christ is a free way for a drunkard, for a whore-master, for a harlot, an enemy to Christ; I say, Christ is as free a way for such a person to enter into him, as for the most godly person in the world.[26] But do not mistake me; I do not say, Christ is a free way to walk in him, and yet to continue in such a condition; for Christ will never leave a person in such a filthiness, to whom he hath given to enter in himself. Mark well what I say; but for entrance into him, Christ is free a way for the vilest sort of sinners, as for any person under heaven. If Christ hath given a heart to a sinner, to set footing into himself; that is, to receive, to take him for his Christ; if Christ hath given him a heart to take him for his Christ in reality, to take him truly

26 That is, who has been such a person; not that continues so, as is presently observed; the sense is, that such are free to come to Christ, notwithstanding their former life, and that without any conditions and qualifications fitting them for his acceptance; and so stand upon as good a foot with respect to Christ's free and hearty admittance of them into him, the way, as the most godly person in the world. Gill

and unfeignedly; Christ is a way for such a person to the Father, though he be the vilest person under heaven. And he is to him a way unto the Father, even while he is ungodly, before he is amended; and he may take his part in this Christ, as an ungodly person, as well as when he is righteous. In this regard I say, Christ is a free way; God looks for nothing in the world from the sons of men, be they what kind of men soever, he looks for nothing from them, to have a right to Christ; but he did freely give Christ unto them, without considering of anything that they might bring along with them.

Nay, more, God doth not only not look for anything, but he will not take notice, nor regard any discouragements in men, to keep them from the inheritance, to keep him off from giving unto them a right unto Christ.

I would fain have this point cleared, and fully and exactly proved, because, I fear that many persons will not receive it; but, I tell you, we must not be afraid to set forth the praise of the glory of God's grace, as fearing the squeamishness of some men. First, therefore consider, that Christ is delivered over unto men, to be their way unto the Father, of mere gift, of free gift; what is freer than a gift? That Christ is delivered over to be a way to the Father, by a mere and absolute gift is most plainly expressed. "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people. {Is.42:6} In matter of gift, what is there in the richest man in the world, more than in the lowliest beggar, to partake of it, supposing the thing that comes to him as gift? A beggar can take a gift as well as the richest man; nay, a thief, that is one condemned to the gallows, may receive a gift of the king, as well as the greatest favorite in court; and, if anything be tendered as a mere gift unto a thief, his very being a thief, and his being ready to be executed, is no prejudice in the world to bar him from participating of that which shall be bestowed upon him as a gift; if Christ be a free gift unto men, then it must follow, to whom the Father will reach out Christ; there is nothing in that person to hinder the participating of him. But some will say, though Christ

be a gift, yet he is a gift upon condition.

I answer, I cannot say but there is a flat contradiction to say that Christ is a free gift, and yet conditions required. What are the conditions in a Covenant, but a mere bargain and sale? I will do this, and thou shalt do that; do this and thou shalt have that; what difference is there between this, and a bargain and sale? That God should require conditions of men, is but to receive Christ upon bargain and sale; but Christ must be really and actually a gift. When the king gives a pardon to a thief, what are the conditions? Peradventure the thief can do his king service, if his life be spared; but if his life be spared upon service doing, it is not a gift, but a bargain, as much as to make contract, thus, do such a piece of service, then life is yours. I say that this derogates from the nature of a gift, that there should be a condition required; and the Gospel, that is, Christ given over to men, cannot be said to be freely given over to them, if man must buy him. Mistake me not, I speak not all this while against holiness and righteousness that becomes a people to whom Christ is a way; for holy and righteous they shall be; Christ will make them holy, and put his Spirit into them, to change their hearts and to work upon their spirits; but this is not the condition required to partake of Christ; Christ himself gives himself, and then he bestows these things when he is given. I say, Christ is given to men first, before they do anything in the world; and all they do, they do by Christ present in them. "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." We do not so much live but by the life of Christ which is life in us. All the actions of life proceed from the soul, now present; how then comes the actions of the soul to be a condition to partake of the soul, that gives life, and by its presence, works such actions? Christ is the soul of every believer that animates and acts the believer in all things whatsoever; must not this life, Christ, be put into a believer, before he can actuate life, which is a stream that springs from that life? How then can this be a condition to receive, to have Christ, when Christ is first come, by whom these things are produced that are called conditions, and afterwards wrought, he himself being present

to work them? So, say I, God bestows Christ upon men to be a way to bring them to the Father; he is an absolute and free gift; there is no other motive that Christ should be anyone's Saviour than merely the good pleasure of the Father, the bowels of God himself. "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be polluted; and I will not give my glory unto another." {Is.48:11} Here is the freeness of Christ to a person coming to him, when he comes merely for God's sake; and God merely upon his good pleasure will do it, because he will. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," {saith Paul,} "so then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." {Rom.9:15-17} So that Christ becomes a way unto them, not out of their will, not out of their disposition, not out of their holy walkings, but out of that mercy that proceeds out of the mere will of God. The Lord's own good pleasure is the only fountain and spring thereof. Beloved, I beseech you, seriously ponder and consider, that the Gospel is therefore called the Gospel, because it is glad tidings unto men; and so the angel interpreted it, "Behold, I bring glad tidings." Why glad tidings? In this respect glad, the poor sinner, he is a broken creature; nay more, he is a dead creature. "Ye, who were dead in trespasses and sins." That life now is reached out unto such a person, that is a dead person; herein it is plain, that there comes forth that grace from the Lord himself that a creature being dead, who can act nothing towards life, yet he shall receive life. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." {Jn.5:25} How come they by life! Is there any action of theirs towards life? They are dead; it is the voice of the Son of God that puts life into their dead souls; and it is glad tidings, that though the creature can do nothing, yet Christ brings enough with him from the fountain of the Father, to bestow upon them, to bring them to him. {Jn.15:5, Is. 26:12} To show you a plain scripture, that Christ becomes a way to the Father, merely as a free gift, without any thing in man required, look into Isaiah 55:1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters,

and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," saith the prophet; and then he falls upon an abjuration in the next verse; "wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not; hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Here is the closure of all; dost thou thirst, that is, hast thou a mind really to Christ, that Christ should say really to thy soul, "I am thy salvation?" It may be thou dost suspect, saying within thyself, Christ is not my portion; I am not fit for Christ; I am a great sinner, I must be holy first; this is bringing a price to Christ; but you must come without money, and without price; and what is this to come without money and without price? {Rev.3:18} It is nothing but to take the offer of Christ, these waters of life, to take them merely and simply as a gift brought, and this is a sure mercy indeed; these are the sure mercies of David, when a man receives the things of Christ, only because Christ gives them; not in regard to any action of ours, as the ground of taking them; I mean, in regard of any action of ours, that we must bring along with us, that must concur that we may partake of this gift. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." {Jn.7:37} Christ speaks there thus to his people, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely;" {Hos.14:4;} that is, I will love them for mine own sake. The Apostle speaks excellently concerning this free grace of God bestowed in Christ upon them; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." {Rom.3:23,24} Mark brethren, first he takes off all creatures, and all that a creature can do, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" and then he shows how we should partake of Justification, namely, freely through Christ. The Apostle speaks at large concerning the participation of Christ, to be our Christ of mere free gift, where he makes a large comparison of our participation of sin from Adam, and of

our participation of life from Christ; and still in every passage, speaking of participating of life from and by Christ, he comes in with these expressions of gift, and that it comes freely. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." {Rom.5:15} There is grace, and the gift by grace; so running in this expression in the 17th verse, where he saith, "for if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Still, I say, observe it, that we partake of life in Christ, and by Christ; and it runs altogether upon this strain, that it comes by mere gift.

Do but look in Ephesians 2:4-10, and there you shall perceive how clear and full the Apostle is in this business, that Christ is made a way to life absolutely and merely of free gift. "But God," saith he, "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Mark how he goes on; "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Still he runs upon mercy and grace, and works he excludes, that no creature might boast.

If anything were done on our part to partake of Christ, we might have whereof to boast. So likewise speaking of Abraham, "for if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;" {Rom.4:2;} and thus we should have to glory, if we should have the least hand in the participating of Christ; therefore God would give Christ freely unto his creature; because man should have no stroke in participating of him, that so it might be to the praise of the glory of his grace; that we should not glory; yea, "that no

flesh should glory in his presence." "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." {Rom.11:6} And therefore the same Apostle tells us that from this grace "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." {Eph.3:12} In regard that Christ is given unto men to be a way unto the Father, and merely of free gift, hence it is that we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Should we regard our own works or qualifications, there would be some mixture of distrust; we should have some fear that God would find out such and such a thought; therefore we could never come with boldness and confidence, if we did not come in Christ as a free gift bestowed upon us; for if there were one condition, and the least failing in that condition, God might take advantage upon that default, and so possibly we might miscarry; and we being jealous and privy to it, that there are faults in all we do, we should be "subject all our lives to bondage," {as saith the Apostle,} and should fear that God will take advantage of all that which is undone on our part; and so not fulfill what he hath promised on his part. But seeing we have Christ bestowed as free gift of the Father, "we come with boldness and access to the throne of grace." To establish, or a little more to clear this, look in Hebrews 10:18-20. "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." How come we to have boldness? Through the new and living way made by the blood of Christ; not a new and living way by his blood and our actions, but by his blood; that is, only by his blood, merely by his actions; and so passed over freely to us; this is that which makes us come with so much boldness.

Look into the closure of all the Scriptures, and you shall find there can be nothing imagined more free; nay, so free, as the participating of Christ to be the way to the Father; nothing so free as this. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And

whosoever will, {mark the expression,} let him take the water of life freely." {Rev.22:17} Hast thou but a mind to Christ? Come and take the water of life freely; it is thine, it is given to thee; there is nothing looked for from thee to take thy portion in Christ; thine he is as well as any person under Heaven; therefore, you shall find our Saviour exceedingly complain of this, as a great fault, "you will not come to me, that you might have life." Yet, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;" {Jn.6:37;} upon no terms. Thou mayest object a thousand things, that if thou shouldst come and conclude Christ is thy Christ, he will reject thee, and that it will be but presumption; but, in so doing, thou rejectest thyself, and forsakest thy own mercy; but Christ saith, whosoever he be, what person soever, "I will in no wise cast him off, if he come unto me."

Secondly, as Christ is a free way, made over to men by free gift, without any thing in man to partake of this Christ, so he is a safe way to those that do take him; I say, Christ is a safe way, a secure way; here is no danger of miscarriage in Christ. Let men take any other way in the world to heaven, but Christ, and there are thousands of dangers, and thousands of ways to miscarry; but there is no way that a soul can possibly miscarry, that takes Christ for his way. "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat," {saith Christ, Lk.22:31, speaking to Peter,} "but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;" nay, he undertakes so, for them that come to him, "that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them." Believers that receive Christ have not only the guard of angels to secure them, but they have the guard of the Spirit of Christ, that shall lead them; not only lead them into truth, but lead them into all truth. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." {Jn.16:13} The Spirit will not take a believer and lead him by the hand, and set him into the way, {as a friend doth, to lead one a mile out of town, and then leave him alone to go the rest of the way;} no, but the Spirit leads him into truth, and into all truth; he will be a companion of the soul, to secure it; a conduit to the very harbour and haven itself.

It is a privilege of this nation, that merchants may have a convoy, a navy royal, it may be to go out with them, but it will hardly come in with them; therefore there is not absolute security in this convoy; but he that takes Christ, he hath the Spirit to go in and out before him; to go forth, to come back, to be all the way with him; nay, he hath given Himself to be his protector. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." {Heb.13:5} In all other ways there may be danger, in respect of rubs, in respect of difficulties or troubles that may arise in them; but, do but look in Isaiah and you shall see what safety there is in this way of Christ, unto those that make choice of him, in respect of any danger that may lie in the way, as the prophet tells us that "an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein;" and verse 9, {mark the security} "no lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there;" no lion, no ravenous beast, nothing to make them miscarry. If a man haply travel through a wilderness, there may be bears and lions; as in New England, and in other foreign parts, they lie open to many dangers; so let a man choose righteousness; I mean his own righteousness, as his way to heaven; Oh; what a world of danger lies here! Satan hath continual advantage against him from that righteousness; his own corrupt heart is ready to swallow him up; but there is no lion in the way, Christ.

Thirdly, as Christ is a safe way, so he is a lightsome way; Christ, I say, is a lightsome way to the Father. Solomon tells us, "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." It is a great heaviness and bitterness to the spirit of a traveler to be benighted; to be overtaken with darkness is very uncomfortable; therefore, when we come to the summer seasons, they are the best seasons for travelers, because lightsome and long. All ways to the Father, but Christ, are mere darkness; nothing but darkness; Christ is the light of the world. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." {Jn.14:26} "That was the true Light, which

lighteth every man that cometh into the world." {Jn.1:9}

Fourthly, Christ {and this is an excellent consideration} is a near way; all that take him to come to the Father by him, have a short way to the Father, in comparison of any other way whatsoever. Christ is the string, other ways are the bow; all other ways are compasses about; nay, they are labyrinths, in which men lose themselves, after they are wearied with toil; Christ is a near way to the Father. "He is near that justifieth me;" who shall condemn me? {Isa.50:8} But more especially observe how near a way Christ is to the Father; you have it excellently described in Romans. "But the righteousness which is of faith, {that is, of Christ,} speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; Or, who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead; but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." {10:6-8} Mark, when a man chooses Christ for his way to the Father, there needs no clambering up to heaven to fetch down Christ, nor digging to the bottom of the deep to fetch him up; Christ is such a way to the Father, that instead of bringing the man to the Father, he brings the Father down to him; "the word is nigh unto thee, even in thy heart." Therefore, the Apostle tells us, "but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." {Eph.2:13} Just as if there were such a course taken, that the Indies {whence are all treasures} should be brought and set at the suburbs of London; just so doth Christ bring the Father unto men, and becomes such a way, as that there is but one step, from the lowest condition of sinfulness to the highest of being a son of God. There is but one step between the Father and them that choose Christ to be the way. And therefore the first thing Christ preached, was this, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What is that? It is present. You have heard much, I suppose, of your northern passage to the Indies; a great deal of time hath been spent to find such a cut, that the voyage may be done in half the time. O look upon Christ, he is such a way to the Father, that the voyage is done in a step from a state of

ungodliness to the state of Justification, to the state of Salvation settled upon the soul. Christ is such a way, that there is but one step from one term to another. Look now but upon the old way of the Law, there must be a continuance "in all things written in the book of the Law to do them;" there must be a going on to perfection of righteousness, before men can come to Justification unto life and salvation. This is a long way!

Now, how near hath Christ made the way unto the Father? This near, "he that believeth, shall be saved." Let me be bold to tell you that you are in as full an estate of Justification before God; you are in as true a state of Salvation, you that are believers; as they that are now already in heaven.[27] "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Such a near way is Christ!

Yet still people will be caviling, where are good works all this while? What, justified by faith alone! Saved by Christ alone! Let me tell you, if Christ be the way, works are not the way, except they be Christ.[28] But must not we work? Yea, but for other purposes; the Lord hath propounded other ends for which we are to work. "For ye are bought with a price; {that is accomplished,} therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." {I Cor.6:20} "Being delivered {our safety is past} out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." {Lk.1:74,75} Do we serve towards deliverance? Then deliverance is not before serving; but saith Zachariah, "Being delivered - we serve." First, we are delivered from wrath, before we step a step into any duties whatsoever; for we do not the duty to be delivered, but we do the duty because we are delivered.

And seeing all things are settled by Christ for us, of free gift, all we do is for Christ himself; I say, all that we do, we do for Christ, not for ourselves.[29] If we do it for ourselves, we do but

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27 That is, their state of salvation is real, and they are in as safe a state, and have as good a right and claim as the saints in heaven, though not in equal possession; they are heirs of it, kept unto it, and shall certainly enjoy it; and are as completely justified as they; and, therefore, their state of justification is as full. Gill

15 They are ways which God has ordained his people should walk in, in order to glorify and serve him, as follows, but not the way of salvation. Gill

29 Not to obtain righteousness, life, and salvation to ourselves, but for the

labour in vain. Suppose we could compass never so much good by doing, it is but labour in vain, it was compassed beforehand for us. If a man will run a hundred miles for money, if that money be proffered to him before he step out of his house, at his door, his journey is in vain; seeing he might have had it before he stepped out of his door; and that which was the end of his journey, might have been attained without troubling himself at all. Christ comes and brings Justification, Loving-kindness and Salvation, he lays them down, presents them, delivers them to the heart; when we are ungodly, he enters into Covenant, that we should become his. What need then all this travel for life and salvation, seeing it is here already?

Objection: But, seeing we get nothing by it, this is a discouragement for men to work, may some say.

Answer: It is true, it is a discouragement to all selfish men to work; and whether a man work or work not at all, it is all one, if it be but for himself; for if a man work never so much, and if he be wholly selfish for himself, God rejects it; but when a man will work for Christ, that hath a touch of the loving-kindness of Christ, and therefore stands ready to speak forth the praise of the glory of his grace that hath so freely saved him; for such man to work, is as welcome to him for Christ's sake, as if he were to work for his own salvation. You have many ingenuous spirits in the world who will be more free to serve a friend that hath already raised them, than others will be to serve a master, that they may be raised. There is a service of thankfulness, which usually is more cordial, more sedulous, than all mercenary services that are forced. This is the true service of a believer in serving Christ; his eye is to the glory of Christ, in regard of what Christ hath done already for him; and not in expectation of anything Christ hath to do, which he hath not done. He looks upon all as perfectly done for him in the hand of Christ, and ready to be delivered out into his hand, as several occasions require; and being thus completed by Christ, not to be mended by the creature, having nothing to do for himself, all he doth, he doth for Christ. Thus you see Christ is a near way unto the Father; there cannot be possibly a nearer way;

honour and glory of Christ alone. Gill

so that now there is a great deal of labour and bitterness saved; thus you may be encouraged to receive Christ for your way. These are some remarkable considerations in Christ, wherein he is our way, wherein we may receive him, wherein is abundance of comfort; but the time hath out-stripped me.

IV Christ The Only Way {4}

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6}

The next thing considerable is what kind of way Christ is to the Father. First, as you have heard already, he is a free way; there is not a bar set up against any person in the world, for the way is open; it is a foul delusion of Satan in the heart of any man whatsoever, to say, Christ doth not belong to me; I would fain have Christ, but I may not close with him; let this consideration be ever so plausible, it is a false consideration; for there is no bar in the world, if there be but a heart to step into him. If a man have a mind to step into the king's highway, which is the subject's privilege, no man can say to him, you trespass in so doing; it is made to be common for all; so is Christ a common way to all sorts of persons whatsoever, to whom there is a heart given to step into him. {I Cor.6:11, Acts 6:14}

Some are offended that I should say so; namely, that Christ is a way even to the drunkard, and to the whoremonger; and the vilest sort of persons have as good a right to Christ for their way to the Father, and to apply Christ to themselves, as any. But, be not injurious to the grace of God; be not injurious to yourselves and others; for what saith Christ himself, speaking to those justiciaries, the Pharisees, both devout and blameless men in their lives? Even this, "that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while they are shut out." If we, the ministers of Jesus Christ, should preach that a whore hath right to lay hold upon the kingdom of God in Christ, to lay hold upon Christ for salvation; this would be counted a licentious doctrine. Take heed you cast not dirt into the face of Christ; "Publicans {saith he,} and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven;" I say it, therefore, and

say it boldly, the wickedest wretch that stands here at this present time in the presence of God, if the Lord hath but given a heart to that wicked wretch, now at this instant, willingly to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, to take the Lord Jesus Christ for his Christ, though he be now in the vilest condition that ever he was in his life; I say, if he have a real willingness at this instant, to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, it gives him an absolute, complete, and perfect interest in Christ; he is as much his Christ, as the Christ of a saint saved in glory. We are ready to run another strange way; if a man have a little holiness and righteousness, he thinks now that in regard of that holiness and righteousness, he may without presumption close with Christ; but he doth in this overthrow the way of the Gospel. Christ "came to save that which was lost," saith the text; but a person it seems must be found before he be saved. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners;" but a man must be righteous before he have to do with the calling of Christ; see now, whether this be with or against the Gospel. Free grace therefore, even to sinners, is no licentious doctrine, nor doth it a jot maintain the continuance in sin. I say, therefore, Christ belongs to a man that closeth with him, though he be in his sinfulness; Christ indeed washes, cleanses, and adorns a person, when he is clothed withal; but there is none clean, till Christ himself enters, who makes clean where he enters.

I thought good to speak briefly thus much by way of addition to what I have delivered before; did I know the objections of persons against what I delivered, I should gladly endeavour to give satisfaction to them; but observe, you shall find the whole strain of the Gospel run continually thus; "Christ came to save the lost;" "Christ died for the ungodly;" "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" "he received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord might dwell among them;" and such like are the terms of the Gospel, upon which Christ is tendered to our souls. Now; then, I say, to every afflicted soul, art thou rebellious, an enemy, ungodly, a harlot, lost? Nay, art thou worse than enmity itself? If thou art not worse, Christ came for thee, while thus, though no better; he comes to tender himself unto thee to take him, whilst

thou art thus, before thou art any better. Now if this be true, when Christ is reached out unto thy spirit, why art thou so doubtful? Why wilt thou answer, no, I dare not close with him, he belongs not to me? But, suppose Christ should speak from heaven as audibly to thy spirit, as I do to thy ear, and say, "be of good cheer, as vile a sinner as thou art, I am thy Christ;" wouldst thou close with him then? Should that be Gospel indeed? I tell you, Christ cannot, Christ will not speak more from heaven than he doth in his Gospel; if you find he speaks in his Gospel; it is much as if he spake it to your spirits from heaven. It was a delusion of the rich man in the parable, he would have Lazarus go and tell his brethren from him in what torments he was; what saith Abraham? "And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." {Lk.16:31} I say unto you, if you will not hear the voice of the Gospel, neither would you hear the voice of Christ speaking to you, for you would suspect whether it were Christ or no.

Well, but you will say, this is a way to lead men to a licentious course of life. I say the contrary; it is the only way to lead men into a more enlarged way of holiness, than any way in the world, and this I will declare by and by unto you.

We have further considered, that Christ is a safe way; that Christ is a lightsome way; that Christ is a near way; we cannot dwell upon these; for we will go on to make good what I promised to you; the consideration of Christ as a free way, to all comers, is the only way to build men up in a more enlarged course of holiness and righteousness, than all the devices in the world can raise them to. Let me tell you, the rarest self-denial, the frequentest prayer in the world, the greatest study, the most beating down of the body by rigorous fastings; and reckon what other graces you can, they come all short to build up a man in obedience to the will of Christ; they all come short of this one thing, to lay hold upon him as a man is a sinner; and to receive it is an undoubted truth, that Christ is as much my Christ now, as he is the Christ of a saint in heaven. And this will further appear, if we enquire how Christ is such a way, as there is no way, wherein there is a quicker

and better riddance of the businesses and employments believers shall have in the world, than in Christ. I will note one thing by the way, before I go on, to make clear this thing, and that is this; it is a received conceit among many persons, that our obedience is the way to heaven; and though it be not, say they, the cause of our reign, yet it is the way to our kingdom.[30]

Pardon me; if I give you a hint or two of another thing before I go on; for let me deliver you this position; that there is no believer, under heaven, doth come to heaven before he hath served his generation; there is no man a believer, that hath received Christ, but after he hath received Christ, he is created in him unto good works, that he should walk in them. He that sprinkleth them with clean water, that they become clean from all their filthiness, puts also a new spirit in them, and doth cause them to walk in his statutes and testimonies. He takes away their stony hearts, and gives them hearts of flesh; he writes his Law in their inward parts, and puts his fear into their hearts, that they do not depart from him. So that I say in conclusion, sanctification of life is an inseparable companion, with the justification of a person by the free grace of Christ. But withal, I must tell you, that all this sanctification of life, is not a jot the way of that justified person unto heaven; it is the business a man hath to do in his way, Christ; but it is not the way itself to heaven; if there be no more to clear

30 This is a distinction of Bernard's, which some divines are very fond of; though, I think, he only says, it is the way of the kingdom; so it may be the way or course of those that belong to the kingdom, and yet not be the way to it; obedience and good works are to be performed by all these that are in the way; they lie in the way, and are taken up and done by those that are in it; but they themselves are not the way, but Christ alone; and the learned Hoornbeek observes in his "Summa Controversiarum Religionis;" pg.716, that "the Doctor allows, in some following passages, that sanctification of life is the business a believer has to do in his way Christ; and that good works are concomitant unto heaven to those that shall come thither; and he also enumerates the several ends of doing good works, though not for salvation; which shows, that he was far from being an enemy to good works, or for giving into licentious practices." Gill

it but the very text, it is enough; Christ here saith, "I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me." Now I ask this question, are our works of sanctification Christ himself, or are they not? If they be Christ himself, then there are thousands of Christs in the world; if they be not Christ; then there is no coming to the Father by them; because the coming to the Father is by him alone, and by him as he is the sole way.

Now what derogation is there in this unto works, to say, they are not the way to heaven; they are concomitant unto heaven unto persons that shall come thither. The truth is, since redemption is managed by Christ, the Lord hath pointed out other ends and purposes for our obedience, than salvation; salvation is not the end of any good work we do; the ends of our good works are, the manifestation of our obedience and subjection; the setting forth of the praise of the glory of the grace of God; and as it is the setting forth the praise of God's grace, so actual glorifying him in the world; the doing good to others, to be profitable to men; the meeting of the Lord Jesus Christ in them, where he will be found according to the promise; these are the special ends that obedience is ordained for; salvation being settled firm before. All that I will endeavour to build up; is this, to keep the true prerogative of Christ to himself alone and that no righteousness of man entrench upon those privileges that are only his. Take away anything of Christ and give it to any creature, and you deny Christ in part; you destroy the Gospel, the life of which stands in the soleness and oneliness of Christ, from the beginning to the end of our perfection.

Now, to come unto that which I promised; Christ, I say, is such a way unto men, that whosoever chooseth him for their way, by him they come to a quick riddance and dispatch of all the business of holiness and sanctification, which they are to do, while they are in Christ the way; as it is with merchants that go to sea, for it may be the end of their voyage is the Indies; but they have business in France, Holland, Spain, or Turkey, and they put in there; their business is not the way to the end, but it is something they have in the way to do, before they come

to their journey's end. All our obedience and righteousness are but so many several businesses here, which we are to dispatch, while we are in our way to Christ, toward heaven; and while Christ is our way, he provides so for us that our business goes on. Now this Christ that we have chosen to be our way is he alone that oils the wheels of our spirits, and puts them into a nimble frame. Therefore, {in I Pet.2:4,5} "to whom coming, {saith the Apostle,} as unto a living Stone, {speaking of Christ,} disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Mark it, I pray you; Christ being a "Living Stone," makes every one that comes to him "living;" for Christ doth not only give life to a person to be active in doing, but he gives liveliness to him to be nimble in activeness; {Ps.119:32;} as we say, such a man is a lively man, when he is quick in his business. The Lord Jesus is as a strong arm that draws a bow; the greater the strength of the arm is, the swifter is the flight of the arrow, and the further the arrow reaches; a weak arm makes the arrow fly slowly, and fall quickly; the Lord Christ being the strength of every soul, he draws the bow with a mighty arm. Do but conceive the more squeamish or sick any man is in his stomach, the more unapt such a person is to labour, for he is soon tired and spent; now from whence proceeds the qualmishness of the stomach? It proceeds from want of spirits, or from weakness of spirits; weakness of life is the occasion of faintness in the stomach. But suppose there be a strong life, strong spirits in men, they are mighty to labour. Such is Christ our way, saith the Apostle, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory;" "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Beloved, Christ is life itself; "in him was life, and that life was the light of men." There is no life, like the life of Christ; it is a fountain of life; and all life that is besides, is but the stream of that fountain. If therefore Christ be our life within us, according to the strength of that life, such is the strength of the spirit. A great rooted tree you know, sends up abundance of sap into the branches; whereas a small rooted tree

feeds the branches leanly; the larger the root is, the larger the sap, and bigger the growth, and the fuller is the fruitfulness of the tree. Now Christ is a large root of the soul, where he is once received; and as he is such a root, so there are answerable spirits coming from him. Mark what the Apostle saith, though he confesseth of himself, he could do nothing of himself; yet, saith he, "I am able to do all things by Christ that strengthens me;" yea, so able to do all things, that he confesses to the praise of Christ's power, "when I am weak, then I am strong;" as if he had said the stronger my strength is in myself, the weaker I am to anything; but the less strength there is in me, the more strong am I in Christ; therefore he sends us to Christ for strength; "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." I beseech you, consider, if you would be active persons indeed, you must have it from him in whom all power and activeness consist. You that are poor maid-servants or widows, you do but little in the world, your stock doth not reach far; but if you were married to a rich merchant, or some such great man, you could do much more; because by the marriage of such a man, you are interested into a large stock, and his stock is yours; so closing once with the Lord Christ, the whole stock of Christ is yours; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and riches, and graces besides; "for it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell." {Col.1:19} Now, when we have a great stock to trade upon, there may be a great deal of doing; and, for lack of stock, there cannot be so much dealings; so, as there is a fulness of stock in Christ, there may be a fulness of activeness in you; especially, when Christ doth give you, with that stock of life and strength, a faculty of ability, to act that stock; when he gives not only strength, but wisdom to manage such strength unto advantage. {I Chron.29:14, Phil.2:13}

Besides, Christ is such a way, that the business you have to do in the way, shall be done by him exactly, completely, and neatly. There is never a school-master in the world can teach the perfect trade of walking uprightly, but Christ alone; therefore in the New Covenant, you shall find this one of the main clauses, "they shall be all taught of God;" that is, that Christ who is God

and man, the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Men are but bunglers that are taught by any other but God. We that are the Ministers of the Gospel leave you dunces in Christianity in matters of practice, until the Lord Jesus Christ come into that ministry, and, by his Spirit, teach your spirits and then when he comes, you shall be exact in skillfulness; "I am wiser than my teachers," saith David; so when Christ comes to teach you, you shall be wise as your school-master. Now if a school-master cannot make true Latin, the scholar will hardly do it; if the scrivener cannot write well, the scholar will make but crow's-claws, as we used to say; therefore learn this truth, if you will be exact in the Christian scholarship, in the mysteries of Christ; go to school to Christ; that is, take Christ for your Christ; wait upon him to instruct you to direct you, to make you skillful; then shall you be infinitely more exact, than by running to any other teacher in the world. Christ, then you see, is such a way, by which we attain to a quicker riddance of all the business we have to do in this way, than any other course besides.

Consider in the next place, as Christ is a way of quick riddance, so he is a sure way, a firm way, a hard way; for there is no fear of sinking while we keep this causeway, this road, as I may call it. Gluts of rain make some clayey, boggy ways, sinking; both cart and man, and all, may stick fast and sink in them; as for Christ, he is a way so rocky, that all the rain that falls upon this way, runs away; it makes it never a jot the more sinking. A man may be as firm, as secure in the greatest storm, as he shall be in the fairest weather. I mean thus, Christ will not deceive; everything in the world else will deceive a man, but Christ will never deceive him. You have observed, sometimes, I know, some places that have been as green and fair to the eye, as the best way that ever men set foot into; but set your foot into them, and you sink up to the neck, they are boggy quagmires. I must tell you, while men make their own righteousness and obedience their way to the Father, they seem to be in a fair and green way which promises firmness; but he that dares to trust himself in the way of his own righteousness to the Father, shall find himself so sinking,

that if Christ come not and pluck him out, he shall sink over head and ears. Ye that go to the Father, and think to set yourselves in his presence, and stand in his delight, in the way of your own righteousness, shame and confusion of face will cover you before you are aware. Paul durst not be found in it, but looked upon it as dung; dung you know is sinking; the righteousness of Paul, he saw it, he knew it, it did not only stink in the nostrils of God as dung, but it was a sinking way; he himself could never keep firm footing to go to the Father by it; therefore, he saith, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." {Phil.3:8,9} Let a man venture himself upon Christ, as he is a way to the Father, and he shall not sink. "Fear thou not;" {saith Christ;} "for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." {Is.41:10} "I will uphold thee;" all the righteousness of man is not able to uphold him; nay, there is that in man's righteousness that will sink him; where there is sinfulness in men's actions, in their righteousness; that sinfulness is enough to trip up their heels, to lay them in the dirt, to lay them flat upon their backs that they cannot rise again. {Rom.11:10} Let men come before God with this righteousness, if God find fault with that in which they present themselves, they are gone forever. Let a man keep the whole Law, and at last fail in one point, he is guilty of all. {James 2:10} See then, how firmly he stands, that is built upon a Rock. He that builds upon Christ, builds upon a rock; nothing can shake him; {Mt.7:25;} he transgresses, it is true, but Christ carries away his transgression, that before it comes to the eye of the Father, it is gone into the wilderness. He casts it behind his back, he throws it into the bottom of the sea, it is blotted out, as the text speaks. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." {Isa.44:22} So that still,

I say, as water falling upon a rocky way, glides away as fast as it falls, that the way is as hard as before the rain fell, and a man may stand as firm there as before; so all our sinfulness, while we are in the way Christ, as thick as it falls, Christ hath so made himself such a way, that it passeth off from us to him, and from him also. We have garments made now a-days, that if rain falls it will glide off a man, and so not soak into him. Christ is our garment; all the wet that falls upon us, lights on him; it falls from us to Christ himself; that is, all our transgressions, when once we are in Christ, pass from us to him. {Zech.3:3,4, Isa.6:7} Now he hath a garment as well for himself, as for us; that though our sins fall from us to him, yet they remain not upon him. The Lord, indeed, laid the iniquities of all upon Christ; but he passed away all this iniquity from himself, by making full satisfaction to the Father. If Christ should have our sinfulness remaining upon him, when it glides from us, he himself would be a sinking way to us. If Christ were sinful in the eyes of God, we could never be clean in his eyes; it is through his cleanness that we become clean. Now Christ is such a way to believers that receive him, that he took away all their sins from them, bore them all, and left them in his own grave, and raised himself without them. {Heb.9:28} So here is no sin charged upon believers, nor upon Christ; it was laid upon Christ, it is true, but he hath cast it off, and sweat it out; it is evaporated and gone from him too.

Thus you see Christ is a firm way, a secure way, to a person; he shall not stir, he shall not be moved, as long as he keeps Christ to be his way. Once again, as Christ is a firm way to believers, so he is a most pleasant way; I say, a most delightful, a most refreshing and recreating way; Christ is a way, as if it were all strewed with flowers; for there is nothing but mirth and sweetness in him. In Proverbs 3:17, you shall find Christ spoken of under the notion of wisdom, of whom it is affirmed that “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;” not only pleasant ways, but ways of pleasantness; as if there were nothing but pleasures; as if the ways were substantial pleasures or full of all manner of delight. Do but observe a notable expression

in Isaiah 35:1,2, where the prophet speaks as if he had been an Apostle in the time, or after the time of Christ; you may see, by him, what a pleasant way Christ is to all those that choose him for their way; in the 1st verse, you have him expressing himself thus, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose;" he means thus, that whereas men lived as in the wilderness and in a desert place; that is, in a sad and solitary condition; they shall be translated into such a way, into such a pleasant way, that there shall be gladness and rejoicing; there shall be the blossom of roses in this way. And to illustrate the pleasantness of the way into which Christ translates his, by translating them into himself, he goes on in the 2nd verse, "it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God;" nothing but pleasure; it is compared to Lebanon, the sweetest place in the world; to Carmel and Sharon, places of great delight; such shall be the way chalked out and held forth unto believers. Look into the last verse of the chapter, and see what a way of pleasure Christ is unto all those that receive him; "and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Behold the mirth that is in the way, Christ! There is nothing but joy and gladness.

But some will say that believers find it otherwise; there is not such joy and gladness, but they are often oppressed with sadness and heaviness of spirit. I answer, there is not one fit of sadness in any believer whatsoever, but he is out of the way Christ.[31] I mean, in fits of sadness in respect of his jealousy of his present and future estate; he is out of the way of Christ, he enjoys not him as he ought, while he is in such fits. Therefore, the Apostle puts believers upon rejoicing always. "Rejoice in the Lord always,

31 That is, as to the enjoyment of him, as it is afterwards explained; or with respect to the exercise of faith, or comfortable walking in the way, Christ, as becomes a believer; otherwise he that is once in Christ is always so; he can never be out of him, as to interest in him, and salvation by him. Gill

and again, I say, rejoice." {Phil.4:4} There is matter of nothing but joy in him; while there is mourning in believers, there are meltings in those mournings; and more joy in the mourning of a believer, than in all the mirth of a wicked man. I appeal to you, that have had melted hearts, whether you have not found a secret content in your meltings, that you rather fear the change of that mourning, than that you are troubled with it?

That which is a most common proverb in the world is most certainly true in this present case, "some men for joy do weep, others for sorrow sing." I say, believers weep for joy, and never mourn more kindly than when they see the joy of the Holy Ghost, in the freeness and fulness of the Lord Christ, poured out upon them; there is never any more kindly mourning for sin, than that mourning, when the soul is satisfied of the forgiveness of sins; I say, the soul is first satisfied with forgiveness of sins, before there is that real kindly mourning in those that are believers. You have heard of some persons, I know, that have been condemned to be executed, who at the scaffold have been so obdurate and stiff-necked, that not a cry, not a tear came from them; yet, just when their necks went to the block, upon the coming of the pardon, when they were discharged, they that could not weep a tear, nor be affected with their estate, no sooner, do they see a pardon, and themselves acquitted, but they melt all into tears; so it is with believers, the more they see Christ in the pardon of sin and the love of God in Christ to receive and embrace them, the more they melt. Therefore, Solomon hath a notable expression; "if thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee." {Pv.25:21,22} As much as if he should have said, kindness is the best way in the world to melt the most obdurate wretch. Thus God deals with men through Christ; he gives them bread when they are hungry, and drink when they are thirsty; and thus he heaps coals of fire upon their heads; that is, he melts them.

So, you see, what an admirable way Christ is, all full of pleasure; there is the Spirit of Christ to make music unto a soul.

“Speak comfortably unto my people,” saith God; and this is the Office of the Spirit, and the Spirit doth nothing else but speak comfortable things. Christ is a way, as the cellars of wine are unto drunkards, that are never better than when they are at the cup; and, therefore, no place like the cellar, where there is fulness of wine always to be tippling and drinking; I say, Christ is such a way; and let it not be offensive to say so, for the church speaks in the same language. “He brought me to the banqueting house, {into his wine-cellar,} and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.” {Cant.2:4,5} Christ hath such a variety of delicates served in continually, and such sweetness in this variety, that the soul is no longer satisfied than it is with Christ. Here is not staying with cups, much less with half cups, but staying with whole flagons; there is a kind of inebriating, whereby Christ doth, in a spiritual sense, make believers, that keep him company, spiritually drunk; he overcomes them with wine. “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” {Is.25:6} Here is abundance, it is a feast, and “a feast of fat things” full of marrow, which is the best of fatness; a feast “of wine well refined upon the lees,” pure and clarified wines; this is the entertainment Christ hath for those that keep him company. The Psalmist, in Psalm 36:7,8, hath an excellent expression to this purpose, {speaking of the excellency of Christ,} saith he, “how excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.” Well, what follows, when they put their trust under the shadow of his wings; that is, when they shall make choice of him to be their way; “they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” Mark, “of thine pleasures,” for {saith he} with thee is the well of life. {Jn.4:14} Here are not only pleasures, but rivers of pleasures; here is not only life, but a well of life; such dainties and delicates, such curiosities and rarities, as the world can never know, nor see, nor taste. We read in the Book of

Revelation of "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." {Rev.2:17} This I am sure of, there are delights in Christ, none can possibly reach unto, but those to whom Christ doth give himself, and those that receive him; therefore, in Matthew 11:25, our Saviour thanks his Father thus; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." And it is worth observing, he doth not thank him, that he hath revealed them to the mighty, great and wise, that abound in all the manner of abilities far above others, but "unto babes;" there is much in that phrase; for a babe is the weakest of all sorts of men; implying thus much, that the weakest of all believers, in the body of Christ; as I may say, the feeblest babe, shall partake of such hidden things, such excellencies of Christ, that all the world shall never be able to dive into, reach, nor comprehend; and Christ himself takes such delight in their societies, that he takes occasion to bless God, the Father, that he is so large for his sake, to do so much for them, above what he did for others. So ye see, Christ is also a pleasant way, a way of exceeding great content and delight. There is yet one thing more.

Christ is a way of all the ways in the world the most easy to be hit; there is no difficulty to find it out, nor to find out a progress in it. Many ways may lead unto a comfortable end; but there are so many cross ways to turn men out, that they lose themselves. In the way of works a man may presently lose himself; there is not one work he doth, but he commits sin in it, and so he presently steps aside, and loses himself, and must begin again, and go about, and come where he was at first. God will never let any soul come near unto him that comes to him with any sin whatsoever. If there be any one sin, all must be undone, and a man must begin again, as they say. I speak this of the righteousness of man, while he makes that his way to God. Therefore Christ is the way; there is no stepping aside in Christ, no losing of him. There cannot be an error committed, which when a man comes to the Father by Christ, shall be taken notice of, as an error from that person; so,

I say, it is the easiest way in the world to be hit. It is true what Peter saith of Paul, "many things in his writings are very hard to be understood;" but mark, in the Gospel, things that do pertain unto the justification of a sinner, are written in such great and plain letters, that he that runs may read them. Do but observe a few expressions, which show how easy it is to hit the way, Christ himself being the way. In Isaiah 35:8, the prophet speaks of a highway that "shall be, and the wayfaring men; though fools, shall not err therein." The Psalmist tells us, that "the commandments of God give light unto the eyes;" and the Gospel without question makes the simple wise; there are some things you know, that you are able to teach fools; though you are not able to teach them deep mysteries. Beloved, Christ the way to salvation, makes himself so plain to those that come unto him, that though they be very fools, yet they shall not mistake, nor err; nay, though fools and wayfaring men. A wise man, if he be a wayfaring man, that is, a stranger, may miss his way; but if a man be a stranger, and a fool too, it must be a very easy way that he hits. A fool may hit a way in which he hath long conversed, which strangers may easily miss; but, saith the Holy Ghost, the way that Christ is made to men, is such a way, that "fools, though wayfaring men, shall not err therein."

Again, Christ is the way, and such a way, as is a spacious, large, elbow-room way, as I may so say; there is abundance of largeness and elbow-room in Christ the way to the Father; therefore Christ himself saith, "if the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." When Christ comes to bring liberty to men, then they are at liberty indeed; therefore, it is said, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." {Gal.5:1} When a man enters into Christ, he enters into liberty and freedom; there is a contracted bondage in every way and condition but Christ alone.

But some will say, how do you answer that place in Matthew 7:14? "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." How can Christ

be such a way of liberty, when the way is said to be an exceeding straight and narrow way? I answer, first mark the words that go before, where Christ speaks not this simply, but comparatively; the way is straight and narrow in comparison of that which he speaks of; for the words before are, "broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" then he comes in afterwards with these; "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life;" that is, in comparison of the vast liberty and scope the world takes to walk in, and the vast rangings of their vain hearts, it is a strait way; but, simply considering Christ in himself, he is a large way; large in respect of the number that go in it, and in respect of the elbow-room therein. In a narrow way, few can go a-breast, it will hold but a few men; but, in open broad ways, many may go together. Mark now, how Christ is a large and spacious way; "and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {I Jn.2:2} See what a spaciousness there is in Christ, that the whole world, the multitude of people of all sorts in the world, may have elbow-room in this way.[32]

32 The design of the Apostle in these words is to comfort his little children with the advocacy and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, who might fall into sin, through weakness and inadvertency; but what comfort would it yield to a distressed mind, to be told that Christ was a propitiation, not only for the sins of the apostles and other saints, but for the sins of every individual in the world, even of those that are in hell? Would it not be natural for persons in such circumstances, to argue rather against, than for themselves, and conclude, that seeing persons might be damned notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that this might and would be the case. In the writings of the Apostle John, the word 'world' admits of a variety of senses; and therefore the sense of it in one place cannot be the rule for the interpretation of it in another; which can only be fixed as the text or context determine; sometimes it signifies the whole universe of created beings; {Jn.1:10;} sometimes the habitable earth; {Jn.16:28;} sometimes the inhabitants of it; {Jn.1:10;} sometimes unconverted persons, both elect and reprobate, {Jn.15:19;} sometimes the worse part of the world, the wicked; {Jn.17:9;} sometimes the better part, the elect; {Jn.1:29, 6:33,51;} sometimes a number of persons, and that a small one in comparison of the rest of mankind; {Jn.12:19;} in one place it is used three times, and in so many senses; {Jn.1:10;} he; that is, Christ "was in the world," the habitable earth, and "the world," the whole universe, "was made by him;" and "the world," the inhabitants of the earth, "knew him not;" and which is not to be understood of them all; for there were some, though few, who did know him; and I will venture to affirm, that the word 'world' is always used in the Apostle John's writings in a restrictive and limited sense, for some only; unless when it designs the whole universe, or habitable earth, senses which are out of the question; for none will say Christ died for

But, secondly, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." What is this straightness? To this question perhaps you will answer, a strict, austere and severe life; a preciseness and exactness without giving to a man's self any liberty whatsoever; this is the straitness of the way that leadeth unto life. But give me leave to add, I confess the stricter Christians can walk the better; and Christ will more and more confine the life of a believer unto a holy exactness; but, under favour, I conceive, this is not the meaning of the text here, that by the straitness of the way is meant strictness of conversation; but rather the meaning is, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way;" that is, it hath not that latitude in it, that generally men think it hath. What is that? Men generally think, that besides Christ, there is something more in the way that leadeth to life, and that is a man's own righteousness; not only Christ, but a man's own righteousness jointly together with Christ; these are the way to salvation; this is the conceit of many men; but I say, it is straight and narrow, in this regard, that all a man's own righteousness must be cut out of the way; it must be so narrow, that there must be nothing in the way, but Christ; when a man's own righteousness is taken into the way, besides Christ, then it is a broader way than Christ allows of; he allows only that way to himself.[33] And that this is the meaning, seems to me by the words that follow; "Beware" {saith Christ in the next words,}

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the sun, moon, and stars, for fishes, fowls, brutes, sticks, and stones; and that it is never used to signify every individual of mankind that has been, is, or shall be, in the world; in which sense it ought to be proved it is used, if any argument can be concluded from it in favour of general redemption. Gill.

33 Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his "Vindiciae Legis," pg.32, finds great fault with the Doctor's sense of Matt.7:13,14, applying the words to Christ, which he represents as a forced interpretation of them; whereas nothing is more easy and natural, for, as Christ elsewhere calls himself a door, and a way, Jn.10:9 and 16:6, why not here a gate and a way? Moreover, if anything besides Christ is here meant, there must be more ways than one to heaven, and Christ could not be the only way; for certain it is, that the way here spoken of leads to eternal life, for nothing else can be meant by life; and as to what this writer says, that then by the opposition, not wickedness, but the devil himself would be the broad way; it may be replied, that not the devil only is opposed to Christ, but everything that is wicked, yea that has the appearance of good, but is not really so; and the broad way may very well be thought to take in the devil, and all his lusts, which men will do, and walk in; and not only open vice and profaneness, but all the false guises of religion and holiness, and a man's own polluted and pharisaical righteousness, to which Christ and his righteousness stand opposed. Matt.5:20. Gill

"of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves;" it seems, in this Christ gives a warning, how to beware of false prophets, by telling men, "that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life." And what false prophets were they? If you consult with Luke, {Acts 15:1-24,} you shall understand who these false prophets were, and withal, the meaning of this text; for there you shall find that these false prophets were they that troubled the church, and occasioned that assembly, the first council that ever was; some {say the council} that "went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law," {vs.24,} or else you cannot be saved. These are the false prophets Christ meant, that would make the observation of the Law of Moses and Circumcision to be co-partners with Christ, as a way to salvation; to whom say the Apostles, "we gave no such commandment." You shall find that in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, all the Apostle's contests were with such "false prophets that came in sheep's clothing;" they were not false prophets that came in wolves' habits, that are openly profane and scandalous; for these can deceive no man, as they show themselves to all; but they are "false prophets in sheep's clothing;" that is, they seem to be sheep, they seem to be austere; they seem to preach nothing but righteousness and holiness; but yet they are ravenous wolves. How so? They make men build upon their own righteousness, and not upon Christ, and so destroy poor souls; these are those the Apostle bids us beware of. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish; having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" {Gal.3:1-3} Thus he argues against the false prophets that will establish the righteousness of man as the way to life.

In a word or two, there are two things more considerable, I will but touch them; Christ is a shady way; in hot weather, men

much desire shady places; you know the case of Jonah, when he was scorched with heat, God provided for him a gourd, and how comfortable was it upon him? Christ is a shady way. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past;" saith Christ. {Isa.26:20} When the scorching glooms of God's wrath break out into the world, Jesus Christ is a hiding-place, "until the indignation be over-past."

Again, Christ is a quiet way. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." {Is.32:17} There are some private ways men affect, because there is but little disturbance; but in some other ways, especially in some common road-ways, there is nothing but quarrelling and reveling; but Christ, he is a quiet way; all is peace while you are in Christ. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." {Rom.15:13} Believe, and there is all peace for you; "being justified," that is, while you are in Christ to justify you, there is "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" {Rom.5:1;} and nothing but peace. I see the time is past; something else I should have considered, especially the ground why Christ is such a way, but I shall rather break off abruptly.

V Christ's Pre-Eminence

"That in all things he might have the preeminence." {Col.1:18}

This admirable, sweet, and comfortable Apostle of the Gentiles makes it the master-piece of his Apostleship to woo and win people unto Christ. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." {II Cor.5:20} As in all the rest of his Epistles, so especially in this, and more especially in this 1st chapter, he shows an excellent faculty he hath this way, in this business of wooing people to come to Christ; he observes what most effectually takes with people to beguile their spirits, as

he speaks himself, with a kind of craft to catch their affections; especially, if you observe from the 15th verse of this chapter, and so on, you shall find, the Apostle meets with everything that is most enamoring and taking with the people. The world is mightily taken with beauty, with completeness of person; Oh! saith one, let me have a beautiful person, it is no matter how poor; if beauty be so taking, then, saith the Apostle, I will present a rare piece indeed to you, in presenting Christ; for such is the beauty of Christ, that there is no beauty like his; Christ {saith he} is "the image of the invisible God;" which is but one commendation of his. But, will some say, so is every man as well as Christ; what rareness is there in Christ in this regard? It is true, man is after the image of God, but where the Apostle calls Christ "the image of the invisible God," he speaks in an eminent manner; therefore, you shall find him expressing himself more fully, in setting forth the rare beauty of Christ in Hebrews 1:3. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Christ is the image of God to the life, as I may say; he is so like him, you cannot know one from the other; he hath so the perfections of God, that there can be nothing more like than he is unto the Father, expressing the brightness of his glory. But there are some, though they find beauty, yet that alone will not take; besides that, some men look for lineage, what stock a person is of; is he come of a good house, of a noble and royal blood? Blood is a great matter, especially with high spirits. Well, if this will take, then there is no stock like of Christ; he is of the greatest house in the world. "The firstborn {saith the Apostle} of every creature;" he comes of that great house, of God himself.[34]

And so doth the creature too, you will say; what rarity is there in Christ above the creatures, for they all come of God. I answer; but, beloved, the creatures are of and in the house of God, as the Apostle speaks of Moses, {Heb.3:5,} "as servants in the house;" "but Christ as a Son." {vs.6} Christ is not only of royal house, but he is born of flint royal house; he is the natural Son of the Father. "This is my beloved Son;" so that he is of the

34 He is the first parent, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered. Gill.

very blood-royal; {as I may so say with reverence} and he is not a younger brother in this house neither, for he is the first-begotten of the house; that is a great matter among persons to marry the heir of a family; so he is. Nay, more than that, he is the only-begotten of the house; there is never another in all the family; and that is a great encouragement, he is "the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth," saith the Apostle. {Jn.1:14} So that if men go all the world over, to find a match in the noblest house, they will never meet with such a one as this of the Son of God. Thus he commends him. But yet some are ready to say, suppose he be of a noble house, he may be in disgrace, and he may live privately, and have no authority, nor be able to do any great matters. If this will do, then the Apostle commends Christ as the rarest, in respect of his power and authority; for "all things were made by him, and for him;" that is, all things in the world are at his command and beck; they bow unto him, they stoop before him; at his name every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and everything goes through his hands.

Yea, but it may be, will some say, he is in disgrace in court, and that is a blur upon him. I answer, No, he is not so great in the country, but he is as great in the court too; for, as he hath the whole world under his power, so he hath the great King at his back; he commands in heaven, as he doth upon earth; there is nothing that he can ask of the Father, but it is answered; he never has a nay; if any come to be suitor to him to put up a petition, he is sure to speed.

But, for all this, he may be but a poor man, though he have never so great power in court and country; and if he be poor, I shall live but poorly with him; if he were rich, and had abundance of wealth, then there were some hope, some encouragement to take such an one. I answer, Christ is not greater in court and country than he is rich in treasure; so you shall find in the 19th verse, "for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." All fulness; all the treasures of wisdom are hid in him; he hath the whole world to dispose of; therefore silver and gold are not to be

compared unto him. Yea, but yet there is one thing more; though he hath riches, yet he may prove a niggard, close-fisted, he may keep all to himself; the party that hath him may be poor enough, for want of contribution.

But beloved, he is not more rich himself than he is liberal to contribute of his treasures to make those that are his, sharers to the uttermost of all that he hath. Therefore in chapter 2:10, {for he follows this subject all along,} the Apostle tells us, not only, in verse 9, that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" but that, "ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." The Head, you know, is not a niggard; what fulness the head hath, it communicates to every part; Christ is a head, and a head of fulness, the fulness of the Godhead. And, as the head is not sparing, but dispersing and scattering all that is in it, so that every member shall have a share; and note, share not merely to keep life and soul together, as we say, but a share to make a man complete; so, if any persons in the world would devise what they could desire in such a one to match themselves unto, you shall find that a creature cannot frame those perfections, in its fancy, which it would enjoy. I say, men cannot frame any perfection to come so near the real perfections of Christ, as a shadow comes near the substance. You have a proverb, that "bachelors' wives and maids' children must be rare creatures;" that is, their fancy will devise what kind of one they will have, and what kinds of perfections they desire. Let the fancy devise what kind of perfection it can, to please sense, Christ shall really out-strip, in perfection, all these fancies, more than a substance doth out-strip a shadow.

Now, the Apostle, having delivered himself thus fully by way of wooing unto Christ, he comes to close in the words of the text; and so declares the end and purpose for which he sets out Christ in so many excellencies as he did; the end of this was, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence;" that he may be taken for the most excellent thing in the world; that all things may be rejected, rather than he; and he set above everything in the world. So then, the point in brief is this, in regard of the rare

excellencies, perfections and usefulness of Christ, which are incomparable, he ought to have the preeminence in all things. In handling of which, we shall consider.

First, what the pre-eminence is which Christ ought to have.

Secondly, why he should have the pre-eminence in all these; and then a word or two of application.

First, what is this pre-eminence that Christ should have. I will not insist upon the word pre-eminence; you all know, for to give a person or thing the pre-eminence is no more than this, to set up such a person or thing above all others, and especially for those uses and purposes we have occasion of them for. I say, to choose such a person before any other, as a person who can better and more certainly bring to pass what we desire than any else can. So that in brief, to give Christ the pre-eminence is to set up Christ above all things in the world; to choose Christ, rather than anything, for every use and purpose to make of him; I say, above and before anything whatsoever, as apprehending him infinitely more able and sufficient unto such purposes than anything else is.

But more particularly, that we might the better see what this pre-eminence is that Christ ought to have; you must know, that there is an infallible pattern drawn out unto us, according unto which we are to write our copy. In general, therefore, the pre-eminence we are to give unto Christ is the pre-eminence that the Father hath given unto him before us, and revealed unto us, that we may, in our way, give the same to him; therefore, we must consider a while what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ. You shall find that the Father in many things infinitely sets up Christ above all things in the world; for he chose Christ before all things in the world. For instance; first, the Father gives Christ the pre-eminence of his affections, his love and his delight. There is nothing in the world that the Father loves and delights in, as he doth in his Son. All the delight the creatures have from the Father are but beams from the sun of righteousness, in the eyes of God. That Christ hath more abundance of the Father's love, than any creature in the world hath, I will give you but one passage or two, for the clearing of it. Look into Proverbs 8:30 & 31. By the way,

you must note, first, that wisdom, spoken of in this chapter, is generally understood by all to be Christ alone; and that which is indeed affirmed of wisdom, can be affirmed of none but Christ. Among other particulars, note these two, to manifest it is Christ, and that he hath that choice affection of the Father. "I was set up {saith Wisdom here} from everlasting, from the beginning." {8:23} I was set up from everlasting; none was everlasting but the Father to set him up; none could be everlasting but the Sun to be set up. All creatures had their beginning and being in time. Now, observe the affection of the Father in this; "I was set up from everlasting;" it doth properly set forth the nature of pre-eminence. Wisdom speaks of many things; God did lay the foundations of the earth, made the sea, and several creatures; but "I was set up from everlasting;" as much as if he should say, these have their place in the world, but my place is above them, in the affection of God. And, that this setting up is meant of God's affection to Christ above any creature in the world, mark what he speaks in verse 30, "then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him;" the meaning is, Christ is here considered as the darling of the Father. All the creatures in the world are brought up by God, in a large sense; but he was brought up with him, that is to say, he was the very fondling of him. When Abraham had an Isaac, Isaac must be brought up with Abraham, and Ishmael must be sent abroad; Ishmael shall have a portion, but shall not be brought up with him. This shows the difference of affection to one before the other. Bringing up with him as an argument of affection; "I was brought up with him, I was daily his delight." God made the creatures, but Christ was his only delight; that is, he could not look upon any creature in the world, and delight in it; but this delight he had in his Son, did swallow up the delight he had in any creature. In brief, the love and delight of the Father hath such a pre-eminence in the Son, that the truth is, there is no creature in the world that doth actually participate of one jot of the love of the Father, but by the Son, and for the Son's sake; as the Son becomes the channel, or rather the spring, that receives from the ocean of God's love. That love

the creature participates of, it participates of it by Christ; for you know that when we partake of sweet streams that run in rivers and channels, we are beholden to the spring for the stream; and what the spring receives, that it conveys to the channel from the ocean. The heart of God, as I may so speak, is the ocean, the first rise of all love to the creature; Christ is the spring that first receives from him, and then through him is all love diffused to the creature. {I Jn.4:19}

You know that by nature we are children of wrath, subjects of the hatred and displeasure of God, being at enmity with God; how do we partake of God again? "God is in Christ, {saith the text,} reconciling the world unto himself;" so that this uniting again to the Father, in the participating of the love of the Father, comes again in Christ. "You that sometimes were afar off, hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ;" afar off, in respect of the affection of God, in regard of our sinful nature; but made nigh, that is, reduced again into the affection of God by the blood of Christ.[35] Here is the pre-eminence of Christ above the creature, he hath infinitely more of affection; he is the spring and fountain of that affection that the creature partakes of. Now then, we are to give this preeminence unto Christ, that reveals this unto us, that so we may see the pattern according to which we are to walk, and do likewise. We should, so make Christ the choicest in our affection; we can never place love and affection more orderly, than by placing affection according to the pattern God sets; so far as we affect according to God and imitate him in affecting, so far are our affections placed aright; to put the cart before the horse; to affect things of lower degree above things that are higher; to give preeminence to things that should come behind, and to bring that behind that should have pre-eminence, is the disorder of man's affection; it swerves from the pattern and example of God himself. So then, Christ hath the pre-eminence over all persons with us; when he is really promoted and exalted above all creatures in the world in our affection. "Whom have I in

35 This must be understood, as the Doctor explains it, of the open participation and enjoyment of the love of God, and not of the secret love of God, and the cause and origin of it; which is his own sovereign will, and not the blood of Christ. Gill.

heaven but thee;" saith Asaph; and "I desire nothing in the earth in comparison of thee." {Ps.73:25} Here is the pre-eminence of affection given unto Christ, when there is nothing in the world in the affection comparable unto him. You shall see the like in the Canticles, 5:9,10, the church discoursing about her beloved, the strangers ask her, "what is thy beloved more than another beloved?" She answers, "my beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand." Here is the pre-eminence ascribed. When the people of Israel heard David say, he would go to war, they fell upon him with "thou art more worth than ten thousand of us." Here was the pre-eminence given to the king. So, I say, when in affection Christ is promoted as the chief among ten thousands; nay, let all things in the world be set with Christ, they are trash to him; then, I say, is given real pre-eminence unto Christ, when, in affection, in regard of the excellencies of Christ, he is set above everything in the world.

Secondly, the Father gives Christ this pre-eminence besides; namely, in a far more enlarged and multiplied proportion of gifts and parts above all creatures. Christ is the Benjamin of his Father, whose inheritance is more than five times as much as all the rest of the brethren. The Apostle tells us that "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name;" {Phil.2:9;} and in Hebrews, that he hath anointed his Christ "with the oil of gladness above his fellows." {Heb.1:9} You shall find that God promotes Christ even above angels; as in Hebrews 1 & 2 which insists mainly upon this point, in how many respects God exalts Christ above angels. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" {1:5} But, I say, principally in respect of parts and gifts, you shall find that that which God bestows upon Christ, is far more than he bestows upon any creature. In John 3:34, it is said that "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;" we receive drop by drop of that we have; we have it but scanty, to that which Christ hath; he hath received the Spirit not by measure. The truth is, Christ receives a proportional gift as head; now a head not only requires to have what should supply

itself of spirit; but such a proportion as is sufficient to supply all the parts, from the head to the foot; therefore, it must needs have more than the several parts themselves; we need no more than for our own sustenance. Christ is our Head, and therefore as a head must have the pre-eminence; that is, a larger proportion of gift's than others; for others are but to find for themselves, but he is to maintain himself, and to maintain the whole body too. Thus should we give Christ the pre-eminence, to which the Father hath exalted him above creatures, giving unto him more than unto creatures; nay, giving unto creatures all they have by him; I say, so should we give him the pre-eminence likewise. Whither should a creature go for water, but unto the spring? Whither should the creature go for strength, but unto the fountain of strength? Is it not derogation unto Christ that all fulness should be in him alone, and we forsake this fountain of fulness to go unto broken cisterns that will hold no water? Mark it well, as often as ever you run to any creature in any necessity or exigency, either before you go to Christ, or instead of going to Christ; so often you rob Christ of that pre-eminence that God hath given unto him, and you should give unto him. If any creature in the world seem in your fancy to have a helpfulness, a likelihood of strength, and of supply; and this likelihood of supply seems more likely than one from Jesus Christ; so far is the pre-eminence of Christ brought down, and the creature hath gotten a pre-eminence above him. Look to it, beloved, while you run to the creature, to the world, for this, and that, and the other thing, and think it must come this way, or it will never come, Christ is wholly neglected of you; and you that are of a more spiritual strain, that when you are under any trial, run to any grace, or temper of spirit in you, or any qualifications, or any performances you can tender; and look after them, as the thing that most likely will furnish you with what you want, while you look faintly and coldly upon Christ, and the freeness of that grace that Christ brings alone with himself; so long you deny unto Christ the pre-eminence of those parts and gifts God hath given unto him above other things. If God hath given unto any creatures more than unto Christ, you might rather have sought unto them

than unto Christ; you might more properly look and wish for supply in them than in Christ; but if Christ hath more than any creature in the world; nay, if Christ be made the sole and only fountain of supply, whether for the spirits or the outward man; then must he have this preeminence to be sought unto rather than anything in the world, for the furnishing of you, and supplying you with that, that must come from this Fountain.

Thirdly, the Father gives Christ this pre-eminence to be the foundation to bear up all things; as the Apostle tells us, "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," {I Cor.3:11;} and in Hebrews 1:3, speaking of Christ as "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power;" God then gives, to Christ this pre-eminence to be the Foundation. The creature therefore robs Christ of his pre-eminence, when Christ must not be the foundation to bear up all things, but other foundations shall be laid; as if there were a firmer or securer bottom to bear up than Christ himself. In Isaiah 28:16, you shall see what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ as the foundation. "Behold, {saith he,} I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." Peter hath an addition hereunto, in I Peter 2:4, "to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." Christ an elect, precious stone, a living stone. Mark what pre-eminence he hath given to Christ, to be such a kind of foundation to uphold all things.

To give a touch of these things; first, he is a stone, the firmest bottom in the world, for the security of that which is laid upon it from sinking; give Christ this pre-eminence too. Beloved, look unto him, and consider him as a stone, an immoveable rock; such a rock as you may sit down with this confidence; that though heaven and earth shake and come together, whatsoever is laid upon him shall never totter. He is a "tried stone," saith the text; that is, more than barely a stone. You know what pre-eminence those medicines have that have probatum est {it is tried or proved} over-written; that is an approved medicine, and, upon

trial, found to be good. You know what pre-eminence that armour of proof hath, when a musket is discharged upon it, and the bullet pierces it not; this is of pre-eminence above others. Christ is "a tried stone;" there is a probatum est written over the head of this stone; he was tried by the Father, he is tried by believers, he is tried by his enemies; and a probatum est is written over his head, that he is a stone with a witness, tried by the Father, first, in his secret council; he found that nothing in the world could stand under that business which was to be done; he was tried by him on earth, as "he made the iniquities of us all to meet on him," {Isa.53:6,} and yet they could not make his back to break; here he was tried, he made him a butt for all his wrath, the whole quiver of his envenomed arrows; yet he stood to it; he was tried by believers; they have put him to it to the utmost; he is tried by his very enemies, who find him a grindstone to grind them to powder; bulwark of security for all such whom they oppose.

Christ is not only a tried stone, but "a precious tried stone," saith the Apostle, that is more; he gives him this pre-eminence, to be a precious stone. You know, when the Holy Ghost sets forth the glory of the church in the Revelations, under the name and title of such and such precious stones, of which the foundation, the gates, and the walls were made, it is set forth in way of excellency, that they are precious stones; here, I say, is pre-eminence, that Christ is a precious stone, as well as a tried stone; precious to God, nothing so delectable as what he doth; precious to believers, precious in respect of beauty; {no beauty like his;} precious in respect of his value; nothing of worth comparable to him; "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul," "thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," {Mic.6:7,} come not near in value to the ransom of the soul; but Christ hath ransomed it, and is raised from the grave. All the creatures in the world, gathered up together, could never make up a sum to buy out the soul; therefore Christ is precious, precious in value and worth; all receipts in the world spend out their virtue, and are dry things, to the virtue and excellency of Christ; such is the virtue that is found in Christ, that let him but come and lay his mouth to the foot, where the thorn is, he draws

out the thorn; nay, he lays his mouth to the plague sore of the soul, and he sucks out the venom; {Num.21:8,9 with Jn.3:14,15} it is true, he drinks his own bane, for the present, it costs him his life; but he sucks out the poison from the person that makes use of him. There are many precious stones, they say, that are of admirable virtue, but yet none is compared unto Christ.

He is "a sure foundation," saith the prophet, that is more; not only precious, but sure; so sure, that lay what load you can lay upon the back of Christ, he stoops not; and, therefore, he was excellently typified by those brazen pillars in Solomon's temple; for they were made of brass, on purpose to show their strength, whereon the whole weight of the porch of the temple lay. Christ hath this pre-eminence given unto him of the Father, that although an infinite weight were to be imposed upon him, yet he should go away with all. And in this regard, Sampson was a type of him, who, being barred up in the city among the Philistines, takes the gates of the city, and carries them up into a mountain, and there lays them; he is so "sure a foundation," that lay the load of all the sins you ever committed; lay the load of all the sins of all the people that shall be saved by him, yet he stoops not; these break him not, he will carry them away as easily as Samson the gates; add to that, the load of all your duties and performances, and businesses in the world; lay all upon Christ, he will do all for you. But, must not we do them; ye will say? Yea, he will do them for you, and in you; first, he will do them for you, namely, in fulfilling all righteousness in his own person, which he presents to his Father, as that righteousness whereby believers shall be justified before the Father. As he doth all for them, so he doth all righteousness in them. Your duties are as the duty you do to a deceased friend; you think it is the last duty you shall do for him, to carry him to the grave; though you may have bearers, you shall go under the corpse, but the bearers shall have all the weight upon their shoulders, so that you go easy, in respect of the assistance of the bearers; all the duties we have to do, may seem weighty; this is a hard saying, and that is a hard saying, who can obey it? But know, that the Lord Christ is such a pillar, such a bearer, to

take all the weight of duties upon his back, that he carries the burden; and so carries it, that you shall go but as the friend of the corpse, the burden shall be off from your shoulders. In all duties God calls for of any person, the strength of Christ is made perfect in the weakness of him that is to do them. Christ takes not men simply from doing, but he takes away the heaviness and the task. We look upon duties as a yoke and a burden; but mark what Christ saith, "take my yoke, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light."

How can this be, that it should be a yoke, and yet easy; a burden, and yet light? It is a yoke and burden in itself to any person that carries all himself, without Christ; but easy and light when Christ bears the weight of it. Again, add to this, that Christ is so sure a foundation, that, besides duties, lay all your burdens upon him, for his back is broad enough to sustain all; the burden of your spirits, the burden of your outward man, all the burdens of the church in general, while she is under the greatest calamities; Christ, I say, is a sure foundation to bear all these; to bear the burden of all the cares of all the people of God. "Cast your care upon him, for he cares for you," saith the Apostle. Finally, Christ is a sure foundation; commit all your comforts unto Christ, he will uphold all your comforts, for he will renew them and enlarge them.

Besides, Christ is an elect stone, singled out by God himself, for this very office, in respect of his excellency and usefulness, to have the pre-eminence. And as he is elected unto it; this imports, it is God's own act that Christ should have such a pre-eminence, to be the foundation. Besides, as it is the act of God, so there is a certainty that God himself must be drawn dry, before Christ shall, or be left any jot unable to do that which is imposed upon him. Look, therefore, what God himself, in heaven is able to do, as he is God; all this is Christ made able to do, by him that sends him about this employment; so that he must be spent, before Christ shall be dry. If a father hath a child, that he prizes as his own life, a slave in the gallies, he will send the ransom of his son to the gallies; he will spend all that ever he hath, rather than his son

shall not be redeemed. There is no wise man sends a servant about any employment in the world, but he furnishes him thoroughly to dispatch that business about which he sends him; it is a vain thing for a master to send a servant for five pounds worth of anything, and not give him so much money. Doth God send Christ into the world to redeem sinners, to sustain the burden of sins, and not furnish him to do the work he sends him about? He might as well have kept him at home, if he did not furnish him thoroughly, that he might dispatch it.

Finally, Christ hath such a pre-eminence, as to be a living-stone, and such a living-stone, as makes all stones living that come near him. Here is the pre-eminence Christ hath; of the loadstone, you observe, all iron or steel that comes near it, it draws all to it, and communicates of its own virtue, to the iron it draws; this is, most like to Christ; for Christ is such a loadstone, that he draws many after him; and, as he draws them after him, so he communicates his own virtue to them; so that now, as he is a living-stone, he communicates life to them, though they were dead in sin; and not only so, but he communicates a power to them, to make other things lively. You have an observation, when once a knife is touched with a loadstone, it will draw another; it is most certain Christ hath this virtue to draw souls to himself, and when he draws them, they partaking of life from him, he gives unto them to be instruments of life unto others. "When thou art converted {saith Christ to Peter,} strengthen thy brethren." Now, seeing Christ hath all this pre-eminence given unto him by the Father, to be such a foundation to bear up all things, let us give him this pre-eminence to lay all upon him, and not upon anything else whatsoever; and so far as we do lay all upon "this stone, this tried stone, this precious corner stone, this sure foundation, this elect corner stone, this living stone;" so far as we will venture all upon him, we so far give him the pre-eminence; but, if he will be setting defenses to the house that is built upon a rock, what is this but a disparagement to the foundation? If the foundation be firm and good, wherefore then served defenses? It is apparent the house will sink, when it cannot stand alone without them; so far

as you set up any props unto Christ the foundation, that is to bear up all by himself, so far you disparage Christ; so far you bring him down, and give him not the pre-eminence. I see the time steals away. There are many particulars, wherein I should show you how you may give the pre-eminence unto Christ. But I must hasten.

Consider, briefly, why should Christ have the pre-eminence? Why should not other things sit cheek-by-jole with him?[36] I answer, because it is the good will and pleasure of the Father that he should have the pre-eminence. What is the reason Joseph must be the chief man in Egypt? Pharaoh will have it so. What is the reason that Mordecai must be led through the city with pomp and triumph, and Haman lead the horse, when Mordecai was counted a slave to Haman? Why, King Ahasuerus will have it so. And, if God will have it so, it must be so; if there were no other reason, but God the Father's will, we, that are subjects, should yield to the Father his own will, and give that honour to him, whom he will honour. What shall be done to the man whom the King delights to honour? "Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour." {Est.6:8,9} As much as to say, those the king honours, the people must honour with him; so, if God the Father will honour the Son with a pre-eminence upon earth, his will must be a Law to us; we must honour him with that pre-eminence, because he will have it so.

Secondly, Christ must have the pre-eminence above all other things in the world, as he is born unto it; he is heir of all things. You know, it is the right of the heir to have the inheritance, or, a double portion above his brethren; Christ, therefore, being the heir of the world, the first begotten of the Father; nay, the only Son; it starts with nature, he should have the pre-eminence above

36 Side by side, or in equality with him. Gill.

a younger brother.

Thirdly, Christ hath bought this pre-eminence; he hath paid for it to the uttermost value of it. He that buys a lordship, it is fit he should be lord of the manor; it is not fit any inferior tenant should be above him, as long as he hath purchased and given a price for it; Christ hath purchased this pre-eminence, and he paid the Father the uttermost farthing. "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied" with it; and therefore he ought to have it.

Fourthly, Christ ought to have the pre-eminence of all things, in that he alone is able to manage this pre-eminence. You know there are many favourites in States sometimes, that have the doing of all businesses of state, in respect of the favour of the prince; but the state comes to ruin, and they also, if they be not able to manage the state. If any creature in the world should have the pre-eminence given to him to manage all affairs in the world, but Christ himself; certainly, it would prove to the world, as the poet feigned it did by the son of Phoebus, that went about to drive the chariot of the sun; Phoebus could manage the same in order; but Phaeton, a novice, a stripling, an ignorant fellow, comes in; he steps up to rule the sun, and the whole world is set on fire; I say, it would be so at least with the world, if any creature should have the pre-eminence to manage the affairs of it. Look to the wisest man in the world and most able to manage the affairs of the world; yet he hath so many irons in the fire, some of them burn for want of looking to; therefore, Christ should have the pre-eminence, because he can go through stitch with whatever business he undertakes.

Fifthly, Christ should have the pre-eminence in all things, because he hath best deserved it at our hands; we usually honour those people to whom we are most bound; according to the kindness received, so is our exalting of the person. Now, what creature in the world comes near to Christ in loving kindness and desert at our hands? Where had we been, had not Christ stepped in between us and the Father to make peace with the Father for us? Oh; what a fearful account should we have come unto at the great tribunal of the Lord, had not Christ beforehand cancelled all that

God could charge us withal, and blotted out our transgressions, and presented us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing in the sight of God. In Christ you live, move, and have your being; by him you have access to the throne of grace, through a new and living way; all you have, and all that you are, all that you hope for hereafter, comes only from this fountain, this Christ, who hath purchased all of the Father for you. If any creature in the world can do these things for you, let the creature be exalted above him; but if he leave all the creatures of the world behind, and out-strip them, good reason there is, according to his desert, that he should have the preeminence. The Apostle, considering the infinite desert of Christ to be exalted by men, breaks out into this vehement expression, "if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha;" that is, let him be accursed with a great curse. {I Cor.16:22} So deserves this Christ at the hands of man.

Now for application of it; is it Christ's due to have the pre-eminence? Then bring down everything that exalts itself above Christ; rear and set up the thrown-down and dejected Christ in you; you that have exalted the world, and made it your god, bring down, this idol, grind it to the dust, set up the Lord Christ; if you will have anything in the world, let Christ hear of it. When men would have anything of a king, they never go to the scullion in the kitchen, but to the favourite, by whom the king hath declared he will deliver things. When the people came to Pharaoh, he sends them to Joseph, as Joseph said, he would do; so, I say to you, would you have anything of God, go to Christ, go by Christ to him. If you come in any other name in the world, if God answers you in that you would have, he answers you with a curse. "This is my beloved Son, hear him;" as he will direct you, so you shall speed; if Christ say, your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven; if Christ will make a deed of gift to you; of liberty from bondage, of grace, or of glory; if Christ hath once past the deed, the Father will underwrite to it and subscribe it. "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed;" for "of his fulness we do receive grace for grace." In John 17:2, it is said that the Father "hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as

thou hast given him." As you will have these things, go to Christ; if you go anywhere else in the world, but to Christ, you shall go without; they are to be had nowhere else. God hath given Christ the pre-eminence; he must rule all, he must determine, and the Father will yield. The Father hath given all judgment to the Son, and he himself will judge no man. The government is laid upon his shoulders; therefore you must go where God sends you, if you will speed for anything of him.

Learn of Christ more, let Christ be the Alpha and Omega; in all things, begin in Christ, end in Christ; do all by Christ, get all by Christ. But must not we serve in duty, will you say? I answer, ye must serve in duty and obedience, but look not that that duty should bring anything; it is Christ brings everything you get; you get nothing by duties; assure yourselves, while you look to get by that you do, you will but get a knock; because of so much sinfulness in the duty; but if you will have any good, you must get it by Christ; your duties you perform, are that wherein you are to walk in the world, and before the world, that you may be profitable to men; but as for getting anything, assure yourselves, while your labour to get by duties, you provoke God, as much as lies in you, to punish you for such presumption, if not for the filthiness of the things you perform.

And as you must bring everything down that exalts itself above Christ; so you must set Christ above everything; know, this will be "the great condemnation, that light," that is Christ, "is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light;" they love to run to other things, and to forsake the light; this will be the condemnation. So far as Christ is slighted, and other things promoted above him, so far you take away the great end for which Christ was sent into the world, which was that he might have the pre-eminence in all things.

Vi The New Covenant Of Free Grace {1}

I will "give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison

house." {Is.42:6,7}

The Lord is pleased by this sweet evangelist of the Jews, this evangelical prophet Isaiah, to pour forth his own gracious thoughts and purposes concerning his dear Son Christ; in this chapter especially, he reveals and declares himself from the beginning of it.

It is worth the while to mark the coherence, to see how these words come in.

First, he declares who it is that he sends into the world for such a business, by two titles, in verse 1, first, he calls him a servant; that is, in respect of the employment and business he hath to do, wherein he is to serve the Lord; and in reference to this business, he tells us what he doth, that this his servant may dispatch it effectually, "Behold my servant, {saith he,} whom I uphold." Secondly, he calls him his elect, and that in reference to the designation or separation of him, the singling him out unto this business. And he doth further amplify the description of him, by the tenderness of this elect unto him, "my elect, {saith he,} in whom my soul delighteth;" here is the description of the person; Christ is this person, as you shall hear by and by, whom he thus describes.

In the next place the Lord propounds the great end for which he doth elect this his servant, and uphold him, and furnish him with his Spirit; for he saith also, "I have put my spirit upon him;" and the end of it is, "that he may bring judgment to the Gentiles;" here you see who he is; how he is furnished; and to what end he is furnished. A servant upheld, the Spirit put upon him, to the end, that he might bring judgment to the Gentiles. The Lord proceeds further, and shows how this Servant of his shall deport and demean himself; after what manner he shall carry this business in the world, "to bring judgment to the Gentiles." He describes this in two circumstances. First, Christ shall dispatch this business of the Father, not in a ruffling or stirring way; he shall not make a great noise, as men use to do, sounding trumpets before them, when they do any good; but as you have it in the 2nd verse, "he shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the

street;" he shall go privately about his business. And secondly, he doth illustrate the manner of managing and ordering this business, by the tenderness of the Spirit of this Christ towards those people with whom he shall deal; he doth, I say, illustrate this tenderness of his Spirit admirably, in the 3rd verse, "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench;" he shall not deal roughly or harshly, but gently, and mildly; and yet as little noise as he shall make, though he shall not seem to promise any great thing by his privacy of deportment and carriage; yet, for all that, in the 4th verse, the Lord, by his prophet; tells us, that he shall be never the further off from performing the business he takes in hand; "he shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth."

And then, in the 5th verse, the Lord is pleased to confirm this by undeniable arguments, that there shall not be a failing in Christ to compass this great business; the arguments, I say are strong, "thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein;" he is not a mean person that undertakes this thing, but the mighty Lord; he that hath done all great things in the world, that have been done heretofore, it is he that undertakes it; and therefore, there is no fear that it should fail.

Having thus discoursed in general, concerning the business of Christ in the world, and the manner of managing it; he comes again with the same thing, and descends unto particular instances and illustrations of what he delivered before, but generally; therefore, first, in the beginning of the 6th verse, the Lord is pleased to show forth the authority and commission by which Christ is authorized unto this great business; "I the LORD {saith the text} have called thee in righteousness;" this call is the commission of Christ; "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." {Heb.5:4} That gives authority to a business, to be called of God. Secondly, he reiterates the helpfulness of God, as well as his call unto it, in the

following words, I "will hold thine hand, and will keep thee." And so, thirdly, he falls in with an explication or interpretation. First, how Christ shall compass this great business which he calls him out unto; he shall do it thus, by the Father's giving of him to be a covenant for the people. I will "give thee for a covenant of the people." {vs.6} Secondly, what Christ is to do, or the end for which he is called out to be a covenant. Before it was said, "to bring judgment to the Gentiles;" that was his business in the end of the 1st verse, and now he expounds what this judgment is. "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house, &c."

There are two main things in the text. The first is, the way by which Christ compasses the great business of the Father upon earth, and that is, by being "given to be a covenant to the people." Secondly, the business itself, whereunto he is called out, that is, "to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison." So you see how sweetly these truths hang together. For the words themselves, there are these particulars considerable in them. First, who it is that speaks, this gracious language in the text; you shall find, in the beginning of the verse, it is the Lord; "thus saith the Lord, I will call thee, and give thee for a covenant."

Secondly, we may consider the person to whom this gracious language is directed and spoken; and that is unto Christ; expressed only in this place by the name of 'thee;' thus "give thee for a covenant." Mark here I pray you, it is not, I will give myself; it should be so, if the Father had spoken to or of himself only; but it is plain here are two several persons mentioned, I and thee; if there be two several persons, then it cannot be God speaking to himself; it must be the Father speaking to the Son, to Christ.

Yea, but you will say, it is somebody else that speaks, and is spoken unto.

Nay, but mark in Isaiah 49 where the same expressions are used, that are in this text; and then you shall plainly see, it is the speech of the Father unto Christ, by many circumstances that will illustrate it. In the 5th verse he begins thus; "and now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring

Jacob again to him;" it is none but Christ that brings Jacob back. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." {Eph.2:13} And in the 6th verse, he saith, "it is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel." Who is it that raiseth the tribes of Jacob, and restores the preserved of Israel? None but Christ, who is the Saviour of all that are saved.

Here he begins to fall upon some of the words in the text itself. "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Here it is plain now that it is only Christ; for none is the salvation of men unto the end of the earth, but Christ alone. Again, look in the 8th verse and you may see more of the words of the text; "thus saith the LORD, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." Here you see likewise, that he who is the Saviour of Israel, is he who is given for a covenant to the people. And in the 9th verse, "that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, show yourselves;" so here is the same thing delivered more plainly, and Christ more fully expressed. This I have opened more at large, because all I shall speak will depend upon the opening of this truth.

Thirdly, in the next place, we are to note, what he speaks unto Christ here, even gracious language in respect of us. "He will give him for a covenant."

Fourthly, note here unto whom the Father gives Christ for a covenant; the text saith, "unto the people, and unto the Gentiles;" that is, to Jews and to Gentiles, to all sorts of people.

Fifthly, note the end and purpose for which the Father gives him to be a covenant unto the people; "to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners out of prison."

So, you have the parts of the text, which afford many excellent truths, and we might single them severally out; but for the sake of brevity, I will reduce the whole substance of this text into one proposition.

Doctrine: The Father is pleased to give Christ for a covenant

to the people and Gentiles, to open their blind eyes, and to bring them as prisoners out of prison. This doctrine, you see, is directly the words of the text, adding only that explication, that it is the Father that doth give Christ. There is abundance of marrow and fatness in this present truth I have delivered unto you, more than people usually can find out in it. We will endeavour therefore to break the bone that all the marrow may be seen, and none of it may be lost. For this purpose, we must desire you to observe these following particulars.

I. What it is for Christ to be a covenant, or, the covenant?

II. What it is for Christ to be given to be a covenant?

III. What it is for Christ to be a covenant to open the blind eyes?

IV. If time will permit, we will then consider to whom this Christ is given to be a covenant; who they are that may partake of him, given to be a covenant unto them?

I will begin with the first of these, what it is for Christ to be a covenant; and herein will consider two things.

First, what this covenant is, that Christ is unto us. Secondly, how Christ himself is said to be this covenant.

What this covenant is, which Christ is unto persons. First, a word or two in general concerning the nature of a covenant. The common and usual manner of covenants, as you all know, is this; namely a mutual agreement between parties upon certain articles or propositions, propounded on both sides; so that each party is bound and tied to fulfill his own conditions, which if either of them fail in, the other is therefore freed from his part, and the covenant becomes nullified, void, and frustrated. You all know, this is the true nature of a common covenant.

There are two sorts of covenants generally wherein God enters with men. There are divers particular covenants, but I will omit to speak of them; such as the covenant with David to establish his throne to himself, and to his posterity; this the prophet Jeremiah speaks of at large, which I shall only touch upon and mention, the rather, because some are conceited there was no other covenant made with David, but the covenant of grace.

"Thus saith the LORD; if ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers." {Jer.33:20,21} This covenant is for the establishment of David's throne, and this is a different covenant from the covenant of grace; that is common to all sorts of believers, one with another; but I omit that.

There are two main general covenants God enters into with men; the one is called the first covenant, the old covenant, the covenant of works; it stood upon these terms, "do this, and live." The other is called a new covenant, by the prophet Jeremiah; and, by the Apostle, in Hebrews 8, it is called a better covenant, a covenant of grace. As for the first, the old covenant, the covenant of works, which stood upon these terms, "do this, and live," it is very probable, if not certain, that Christ was this first covenant unto men, even the covenant of works; for, however it be not a covenant of grace, as the second and new covenant is, yet it may, in some sense, be called a covenant of grace, in reference unto other creatures; for all creatures are under this tie, to do this; that is, what their part is which God hath imposed upon them; yet no creature hath this privilege of grace, that in doing this, he should live; the sun doth his part, he runs his race; yet the sun lives not in, or upon the performance hereof; brute creatures do their part; that is, the trade they were set about; yet, they die and perish, and are no more, when they have done. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" {Ps.8:4} That he should have life, and no other creature in the world, seeing there can be no difference in the creatures of themselves; the difference must be in the grace of God, which makes it that some creatures should live by doing, and others not. In Proverbs 8:31, you shall see the ground of this covenant; when the Lord made all things in the world, Wisdom, which is Christ, there tells us, that she was the delight of the Father, and her whole "delight was with the sons of men." I say, the foundation upon

which the difference was built, between man and other creatures, that he hath this covenant by grace, others not, is this, all the delight of Christ was with the sons of men; he himself singled out the sons of men to be his delight, as he was the delight of the Father; and for his sake the Father will do more for them, than for other creatures.

But now, the covenant which the Lord mentions in this place, by the prophet, is not the first, but the second covenant. "I will give thee for a covenant to the people;" he means here, not the covenant of works, but the covenant of grace; which covenant is mentioned in Jeremiah 31:33, and renewed again by the prophet Ezekiel, in chap. 36:26; and also Hebrews 8, where you shall find both the covenant itself, and how, and in what sense, Christ is said to be that very covenant unto men. In verse 6, this is appropriated unto Christ, to be his great privilege, to have the sole hand and managing of this new covenant. "But now {saith the Apostle} hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant;" and what is this "better covenant?" Mark what follows in verse 8, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers;" for in verse 10, "this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Here is the substance of the covenant, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Now, all that I will note briefly out of all this, shall be only one proposition, wherein you shall see both a vast and comfortable difference between this new covenant, and all other covenants that God made with men; it differs, I say, exceedingly, and the comfort lies in the difference, which is this. All other covenants

of God, besides this, run upon a stipulation; and the promise runs altogether upon conditions on both sides; the condition on God's part was, they should live; the condition on man's part was, that he might live, he must do this; and mark, the conditions in that covenant were such, that in case man did fail to perform his condition, the covenant was broke, and God was free from giving life; which accordingly came to pass; for man failing in doing, the covenant was actually broken, disannulled, and frustrated, and man lay under the curse of the breach of the covenant in not doing. But in this covenant of grace, to wit, the new covenant, it is far otherwise; for there is not any condition in this covenant; mark what I say, and I beseech you hear me with an impartial and unprejudiced opinion. I know I shall go against the strain of some; but, I hope, what I shall deliver shall be firmly proved from scripture. I say, the new covenant is without any conditions whatsoever on man's part. Man is tied to no condition that he must perform, which if he does not perform, the covenant is made void by him.[37]

The first argument is this, the covenant is called an "everlasting covenant;" and here, in Hebrews 8, God saith, "I will be merciful to your iniquities, and your sins will I remember no more." Now suppose there were conditions for man to perform, and suppose man did fail in those conditions, what were become of the covenant? Man did fail in the condition, whilst there were conditions before in the first covenant, and thereby the covenant

37 This, though abundantly confirmed by the following arguments, is found fault with by some, particularly by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. pg.59, and yet is no other than what some of the most judicious divines have asserted, particularly the famous Witsius; "We, {says he in his "Economy of the Covenants;" Book 3, chap.1, sect.8,} agree with them, who think, accurately speaking, that the covenant of grace has no conditions on our part, properly so called." And elsewhere, he has these words; "this is owned, that this is the true and proper condition of the covenant of grace, by which it is chiefly distinguished from the covenant of works, that all righteousness in which the right to life is only founded, is performed by the Mediator and Surety of the Covenant; hence it follows, this righteousness being admitted, that no condition, properly so called, can be required of the elect, by which they obtain for themselves freedom from punishment, and a right to life." And indeed what some call conditions of the covenant, as faith, repentance, and obedience, are no other than parts or blessings of it, which are absolutely promised in it; {see Ezek.36:26,27;} or what the Doctor afterwards calls the fruits and effects of the Covenant. Gill.

was frustrated. Man is not now so confirmed, but if there were conditions for him to perform, which if he did not perform, the covenant should be broken; I say, he is not so confirmed, but he might fail in those conditions; nay, if those be the conditions, that some men conceive, then he daily fails. And, if the covenant stands upon such conditions, the covenant is frustrated so soon as the conditions are broken. So, I say, if the covenant stands upon any conditions to be performed on man's part, it cannot be an "everlasting covenant," except man was so confirmed in righteousness, that he should never fail in that which is his part.

But, you will say, there are many conditions mentioned in this covenant; it is said, that there must be "a Law put in the mind, and written in their heart," with many other such things. I answer, beloved, it is true, God saith, "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, &c." But do you find in this or in any other mention of a covenant that this is the condition to be performed on man's part; I say, that this is the condition of the covenant, and such a condition, that if a man perform it not, the covenant is frustrated? There is no such thing in the text.

But you will say, Conditions, or no conditions, a man must have his heart in this manner. I answer, it is true, by way of consequence, that after we are in covenant with God, he will bestow these things upon us as fruits and effects of that covenant; but, it is not true, by way of antecedence, that God doth require these things at our hands, before we shall be partakers of the covenant.

Argument 2: Observe, I pray, and you shall plainly perceive, that man hath no tie upon him to perform anything whatsoever in the covenant, as a condition that must be observed on his part; let the covenant itself be judge in this case; as it plainly shows where all the tie lies, and as plainly shows, that the whole performance of the covenant lies only upon God himself; and that there is not one bond, or obligation, upon man to the fulfilling of the covenant, or partaking of the benefits of it. Mark it in Jeremiah, in Ezekiel, or in Hebrews; read those passages over, wherein the tenure of the covenant is contained, and you shall easily see where the tie is,

as Hebrews 8:10, "for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;" he will put it in, and write it; and he will be to them a God, and they shall be to him a people. The word shall, here, is a word of over-ruling; it is a word of power; as if he had said, I will order it so; it follows, "and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Know him how, by their own study and industry? No; see John 6:45, and you shall see that that condition of knowing the Lord is to be performed by the Lord, for it is there said, "they shall all be taught of God." Observe, also, the larger expression of the covenant in Ezekiel 36:25-28, and there also, you shall plainly perceive, that still all the tie lies upon God himself, and nothing at all upon man. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God;" and in verse 29, "I will also save you from all your uncleannesses;" and I will multiply the fruit of the earth, I will do it. Where is there in all this one word that God says to man, thou must do this? If God had put man upon these things, then they were conditions indeed; but, when God takes all upon himself, where are the conditions then on man's part?

Give me leave, I will ask you but this question; suppose there should be a fault {I make but a supposition} of performing in this covenant, whose were the fault? Must not the fault or failing to perform the covenant be his, who is tied and bound to everything in the covenant, and saith, he will do it? If there be a condition, and there should be a failing in the condition, he that

undertakes all things in the covenant must needs be in fault; but the truth is, these particulars mentioned are not the conditions of the covenant, but they are consequents of the covenant; the main substance of the covenant is included in these words, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." But, "sprinkling with clean water, taking away a stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh;" all these are nothing but the fruits of the covenant, which is, that God is the God of such a people, and the people are the people of such a God. For by virtue of this union, or uniting himself to his people, God doth cleanse and purge, he doth sanctify and refine them. As he becomes the God of his people, so he purges and cleanses them. {Acts 15:9} He doth not come first to men, and say, make yourselves clean; get you the Law of God in your minds; get you the fear of God into your hearts; get you power to walk in my statutes; and, when you do this, then I will be your God; if it did run so, then here were conditions indeed; but, it runs not thus; all the tie lies upon God's part, to do everything that is mentioned in the covenant. "I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me." {Ps.57:2}

But you will object, and say, if all lies upon God's part and man must do nothing, then all his life time he may do what he list. I answer, you must make a difference between doing anything in reference to the covenant, as the condition thereof, and doing something in reference to service and duty to that God who freely enters into covenant with you. I say only, that in a way of condition of the covenant you must do nothing.

Argument 3: Nay, the covenant in the actual substance of it, is made good to a person before he can do anything.[38] The main thing in the covenant is God's being the God of a people, and the model and draught of that, nothing but God's love to man; God's love to give himself to man; God's love to take man to himself. Now this love of God is cast upon man before he can do anything; before the children had done good or evil. "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Shall I need to tell you, that the

38 Christ, who is the Covenant itself, the sum and substance of it, must be first given to a man, before he can do anything good; for without Him we can do nothing; and faith must be given, without which we cannot please God. Gill.

covenant is then fulfilled in the substance of it, when men are actually justified. When men are justified, God hath made good his covenant unto them; he is their God, and they are his people; now where are the conditions of this covenant? Take but notice what the Apostle saith, and tell me what conditions you find in it? "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness &c." {Rom.4:4,5} There are two phrases here to show there can be no conditions to make up the covenant on man's part; first, "to him that worketh not;" if there must be no working to partake of justification, then there is no conditions unto it. And again, if we must "believe on him that justifies the ungodly," then justification is past-over to a person whilst he is ungodly; now, where is the condition of the covenant, while there remains nothing but ungodliness in men? But if these things must be fulfilled as conditions, namely, to change our hearts, and such like; then we are not justified as ungodly, but as righteous; and so it directly contradicts that of the Apostle. We must therefore conclude that this covenant, which is then made good when a person is justified, is conferred and bestowed on him, before there can be any such thing as a condition in him.

Yea, but you will say to me, peradventure though works be not the condition of the covenant; yet, we hope you will yield, faith is the condition of the covenant.

I answer, beloved, I beseech you observe me carefully in this, for I am now upon a vital point, and I shall desire to go as evenly as the scripture will guide me in it. I must needs tell you directly, and according to the truth, that faith is not the condition of the covenant.[39]

39 This also is condemned as an error, by D. W. Gospel Truth, &c. pg. 57; but it is with great propriety and truth here asserted; for faith is the fruit of electing grace, the gift of God, the operation of his Spirit, and of which Christ is the author and finisher; and is not of men, or in their power to produce in themselves, or exercise; yea, it is a blessing of the covenant of grace, and not a condition of it; or is what men have in consequence of their being in the covenant, and not as the condition of their entrance into it. And the same is acknowledged by great many divines, particularly that excellent writer, often quoted, Professor Witsius; "the covenant of grace," says he, "or the Gospel strictly so called, which is the formula of the covenant, seeing it

"He that believes shall be saved, he that believes not shall be damned." Is not faith here the condition of the covenant?

I answer, there is no person under heaven shall be saved till he have believed. This I grant; yet this will not make faith to be the condition of the covenant. For first, consider faith as an act, our act, and as we do it, so I say it is a work; our act of believing is a work. If therefore we perform the condition that is a work for the enjoyment of the covenant, then the covenant doth depend upon a work; but it doth not depend upon a work, for the text saith, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, &c."

You will say, in that text, believing is required to the justifying of the ungodly.

I answer, an ungodly person, after he is justified, believes; but you must understand it, it is not the faith of the man that simply and properly justifies, but it is that Christ in whom he believes; believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly; it is he that justifieth, that is Christ. It is not believing that justifies. Mark well that phrase; "him that justifieth." Justification is an act of Christ, it is not an act of faith!

But you will say, it is an act of Christ by faith.

I answer, then Christ justifies not alone. Is faith Christ himself? If not, then Christ must have a partner to justify, or else faith doth not justify, but Christ alone doth it. Nay, I say more, Christ justifies a person before he believes; for, he that believes is justified before he believes; for I ask you, whether in justification a man must believe a truth or a falsehood? You will say that he must believe a truth; then say I, it is a truth that he is justified before he believes it; he cannot believe that which is not, and if he be not justified, that he may believe it, he then believes that

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consists in mere promises, properly prescribes nothing as a duty; it requires nothing, it commands nothing, no not indeed, believe, trust, hope in the Lord, and the like." And again, "nor does that seem to be accurately said, that faith is a condition which the Law requires of us, that we may be accounted righteous and guiltless with God. The condition of justification properly speaking, is no other than perfect obedience; this the Law requires, nor does the Gospel substitute another, but teaches that the Law is satisfied by our Surety Christ; moreover, it is the business of faith to accept of the satisfaction offered to it, and by accepting, to make it its own." Gill.

which is false. But he is first justified before he believes, then he believes that he is justified.[40]

But what then serves faith for?

I answer, it serves for the manifestation of that justification which Christ puts upon a person by himself alone; that you by believing on him, may have the declaration, and manifestation of your justification.[41] Mark what the Apostle saith, whereby you shall find the true use of faith, that is not the condition, without which we receive no benefit from Christ; but rather it is the manifestation of that which is already done, and received. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." {Heb.11:1} I pray you observe the Apostle's expression, for there is abundance of light in it. Faith is the evidence of things, it is not the being of things; and it is the evidence of things not seen. A man is justified, and that by Christ alone, but it is not known to him, it is an unseen thing. Well, how shall he see this, and know that it is so? The text saith that "faith is an evidence;"

40 Justification before faith, though caviled at by many, is certain; since God justifies the ungodly, and since faith is the fruit and effect of justification, and the act which is conversant about it, and the object must be before the act; and besides justification took place at the resurrection of Christ; yea, from all eternity, as soon as he became the Surety of his people; and which has been embraced, affirmed, and defended by divines of the greatest note for orthodoxy and piety, as Twisse, Pemble, Parker, Goodwin, Ames, Witsius, Maccovius, and others. See my "Doctrine of Justification," pg.36–54. Gill

41 And, indeed, for what else can it serve; since it is neither the cause, nor matter, nor condition of justification? At most it can only serve as the hand that receives the righteousness of Christ for justification, and claims an interest in it, and takes the comfort of it; nor does the Doctor say, it serves only for a manifestation, but that it does serve such an end; as it is certain it does, as has been owned by many judicious divines; and particularly the learned Hoornbeeck thinks, that the difference between Dr. Crisp, and others, may easily be made up, by distinguishing justification into active and passive; the former is the act of God justifying, the latter the termination and application of it to the conscience of believers; the one is done at Christ's satisfaction, the other when a person actually believes; "this indeed is a manifestation of that." Afterwards he says, "we do not reject the distinction between justification as made in Christ and as manifested to the soul, though in the explication of it, we do not in all things agree." And it is the former, and not the latter, that is properly justification, as Maccovius observes, "it is said of God that he justifies, Rom.4:5, and of us that we are justified, not that there is therefore a twofold justification; for that which is passive is improperly called justification, and is only the sense of active justification." And what then is this passive justification, which is by faith, any more than a perception, evidence, and manifestation of what is properly Justification? Gill.

faith gives evidence to this thing, faith makes it known; by faith we come to apprehend it; by faith we come to rejoice in it, as we apprehend it to be our own. It is true, indeed, Christ has honored faith admirably; but let us take heed we do not over-honour it, to give the peculiar reserved prerogative of Christ himself unto it. If faith were a concurrent thing with Christ, and Christ did justify a person alone, what would follow? Consider, when a man is justified, he is justified from all unrighteousness, and if his faith justifies him from all unrighteousness, this thing will unavoidably follow; that that thing which is full of unrighteousness will justify a man from unrighteousness; as much as to say, a man is justified from sin by sin.

But you will say, faith is not sin.

I answer, No, faith itself is not sin; but that faith acted by believers is full of sin; and the fulness of sin in it makes faith in some sense, a sinful faith; and if it be sinful, how can that which is sinful justify man from sinfulness? What need Christ be without all sin to justify a person, if anything else could do it that hath sinfulness in it? You must either say, there is no sin in your faith, or else you must say, you are justified by that which hath sin in it; yet, I say still, as faith is an evidence, a manifestation, so it may be said to be our justification; that we are, in regard of our own hearts, and our own spirits, justified by faith; but God-ward, as we stand actually before him, a discharged people from sin, and so consequently partakers of the covenant; as we stand thus, I say, it is not faith that justifies, neither wholly, nor in part; but Christ alone freely for his own sake, considering a person as ungodly, so he justifies him.

Beloved, let me tell you, though faith itself cannot thus be called our righteousness; yet in respect of the glory that God ascribes to it, that it seals to men's souls the fulness of righteousness, how can you consider a person a believer, and withal ungodly? When men are believers, they cease to be ungodly; but if they are not justified till they believe, Christ doth not justify the ungodly, but the godly; and then that truth which I have delivered cannot hold current, that we must believe on him

that justifies the ungodly; but rather, we must believe on him that justifies the righteous. But, as I said, we do not believe that we may be justified; but we do believe, and truly believe, when we are, and because we are justified. So that still it stands firm, we are not justified, we are not in covenant, we partake not of the covenant, by any condition we perform, till which performance the covenant cannot be made good unto us; but we are in covenant, and Christ makes us to be in covenant, for his own sake, without any condition in the creature, "showing mercy to whom he will show mercy;" without anything, I say, the creature is to do, to this end, to partake of the covenant.

In the next place consider, how Christ himself can be said to be the covenant. For the text tells us, that he doth not only give Christ that there may be a covenant with men; but, saith; "I will give thee for a covenant." Christ himself is made the covenant. I answer that Christ is the covenant three ways. First, Christ is the covenant fundamentally. Secondly, Christ is the covenant materially. Thirdly, Christ is the covenant equivalently.

First, Christ is the covenant fundamentally; that is, he is the original of the covenant, the beginning of the covenant. The covenant of grace takes its being from Christ. Adam was all mankind, as all mankind was in Adam, in the loins of Adam; so Christ is the covenant, and all the covenant is, as it were, in the loins of Christ, and springs out of him; he is the covenant maker; he is the covenant undertaker; he is the covenant manager; he orders the covenant; he is the covenant dispatcher; he doth everything in the covenant; he makes the articles; he draws God the Father, and man, to an agreement unto the articles. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." {Ps.110:3} "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." {II Cor.5:19}[42] Christ brings

42 By whom are meant, not all the individuals of mankind, for these are not all in Christ, nor all reconciled to God, multitudes dying in enmity to him, nor all interested in the blessing of non-imputation of sin; whereas each of these is said of the world here; but the elect of God, who are chosen in Christ, whose peace, Christ is, whose sins are not imputed to them, and against whom no charge of any avail can be laid, and particularly the people of God among the Gentiles are here designed, who are frequently called the world in scripture; being the world which God loved, for whose sin Christ is the propitiation, and of the reconciling of which mention is particularly made. Jn.3:16; I Jn.2:2; Rom.11:12,15. Gill.

God down to the terms of the covenant, to yield to them. Christ brings man also to be willing to it. Christ is called "the Mediator of a covenant." {Heb.8:6} A mediator, what is that? A mediator of a covenant is the person that hath the management of it on both sides. A covenant is no covenant till it be concluded, and done; there may be articles, but it is not actually a covenant till both sides are agreed; so there cannot be a mediator of a covenant till there be one that is able to bring both sides together, and make up a conclusion. And thus Christ is the covenant, or the Mediator of the covenant, as he manages all things in it. Job hath an excellent expression to show forth the soleness of Christ to deal in the covenant between God and men; for he makes a bitter complaint and pitiful lamentation; he knew not how to deal with God, and gives this as a reason of it, "for he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment; neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." {Job.9:32,33} It is Christ that is this daysman. It is all one with an umpire, or a mediator; he must come between, and lay his hand upon us both; what is that? Upon God and us; the meaning is that he that is the daysman, the mediator, must be such a person that hath power on both parties that enter into covenant together; he must lay his hand upon God; that is, he must have power with God, and bring God to such terms as he propounds; and lay his hand upon man, to bring man on; and when he lays his hand upon both, then he is a mediator of the covenant. And, in this sense, Christ is a covenant, as he hath the managing and dispatching of all the business of the covenant, from the first to the last.

Secondly, as Christ is fundamentally, so he is materially the covenant; Christ himself is the covenant, as he is Christ. This seems strange; but there is an admirable wisdom of God to be adored in this thing; the covenant substantially stands in this; "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Now Christ is both these in himself; he is God unto his people, and he is the people unto God, and before him. Both these meet in that one Christ, and are both of them admirably illustrated to us, Matthew

1:23, where, upon the birth of Christ, the angel saith, "they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." Christ is "God with us" not only as Christ's Godhead did take the human nature simply; but Christ is God with us, that is, Christ is so ordered by the Father for men, that the Father may see the Deity and Humanity made up in one, to wit, Christ's person; and so, consequently, all the people that are the people of God, are considered in Christ, as part of him; for Christ is considered two ways, either as he consists of the Godhead, and one individual human nature; or, as he consists of that and a compact of many persons considered as members of Christ's mystical body; so Christ is the Head, and all those that are in covenant with him, are members; and this head and members together make up one complete and entire body. Consider Christ thus, and then you shall see in him God, the God of his people, and men the people of God, and both these meet together only in Christ.

Christ, in a very few words, doth very excellently set forth this his own being, materially, the covenant. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." {Jn.17:22} Here first, he speaks of unity among themselves, as members have unity in one body; then he goes further in the next verse, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;" as much as to say thus; I, as I have assumed humanity, and besides the humanity, have assumed the members of my mystical body, so I am in them, and they in me; and by this my being one with them, and they one with me, they become one with us both; so, God to be the God of his people, and the people to be the people of God, meet in this one Christ, God and man; Christ as head united to his members, and they as members in covenant with him.

Thirdly, Christ himself is said to be the covenant equivalently; I mean thus, though the main substance of the covenant be fulfilled to believers as soon as they are justified, that is, while they are ungodly; yet there are particular branches, or rather fruits of the covenant, to be fulfilled to believers in their season; to have God more abundantly pouring out himself in all

manner of graciousness, this is to be fulfilled in season. Now, Christ is said to be the covenant, as a present pawn, or earnest delivered into the hands of a person, at the very instant of his justification; which pawn, is of equal value and worth with the whole covenant, when it is fulfilled to the uttermost; so, Christ being given over to men, as a pawn and earnest, they have, at the first instant, the whole covenant equivalently. If a man deliver money to another, and he receives a pawn worth the money, then he hath the money in his hand, though not in coin, yet in value, he hath as much as the money is worth; and so, by consequence, it is as much as if he had the money itself. Christ, delivered over in justification, is of equal value with all that is to be fulfilled, when the covenant is fulfilled to the uttermost. He being of equal value, it follows, that Christ is the covenant by estimation, though not in respect of the accomplishment and fulfilling of the several fruits.

Thus I have done with the first branch; this I desired to clear more fully; because I find the world is marvelously puzzled with the mixture of other things besides Christ in the covenant; we will go a little further this morning, because I would dispatch that I intend, and would not willingly leave anything, not knowing when, or whether ever I shall see your faces again. I will therefore enter upon the next thing of great concernment; I hope there hath been no mistake of what I have spoken, and then I know the truth of it will justify itself against all contradiction.

II. The second thing is, what is it for Christ to be given for covenant? I answer, all that benefit that Christ is, or all that Christ can be to a person, is a mere deed of gift; and it, comes only as a very true and real gift unto men, upon no other consideration, but simply the Father's good will {Is.65:1} to make a gift of it; and this depends necessarily upon what we showed before. If that which we have hitherto spoken be not true, this cannot be true; if the covenant be with condition, and the condition to be performed for the covenant; then certainly Christ is not a mere gift. That which a man buys or pays for, he makes a reckoning of it as due debt; he cannot make a reckoning of it as a gift; but you see it plainly in the text, that Christ is given to be covenant; Christ is

not bought to be a covenant, he is not paid for. Covenants between men I know are thus, if a man has a house or land to sell, there are articles drawn up and agreed upon; and he that must have the land, must pay for it; it is not so in this covenant; but it is as in covenants that are deeds of gifts, which run thus, I will freely bestow this upon you; so God bestows his Christ freely, passing him over to men, without anything from them in consideration of this Christ which is bestowed. And this imports two things; I say, that Christ is a gift, imports two things.

First, that in the participation of Christ, God requires nothing of man; he expects nothing from man in consideration of that Christ he bestows upon him. I say, he requires nothing, he expects nothing, he will take nothing; nay, he will not give Christ unto men, except they will take him freely, without bringing any thing for him.

Secondly, this gift, Christ, being given unto men, imports that there is no vileness, no sinfulness, no kind of wretchedness of man, that can be any bar to man from having a full part and portion in this Christ; a gift implies them both. I shall open them both, as clear as may be.

First, I say, Christ is conveyed unto men as a gift; without the Father's requiring anything of them, or expecting anything from them; but only barring them from bringing, or thinking to bring anything to this end, that they may have a part or share in Christ. I shall first declare, and make clear, that it is directly contrary to the nature of a gift {considered really as a gift} to require, or expect anything in consideration of that which is given. When things are passed over to a man upon consideration, either; they are passed over by bargain and sale, or else by way of bribe. When a man desires his cause may go well in a suit of Law, he will give the judge something; but the consideration must be, that the judge shall carry the cause on his side; this that the judge receives, is not a gift, but a bribe, because something must be done for it. When a man must have such and such lands, or such and such goods, and there is a contract, you must give me so much money, and you shall have them; these lands and goods are

not gifts, when money must be paid for them.

If we must bring anything to the Father in consideration of Christ the covenant, then here is a bargain and sale between the Father and us; I will give you my Christ, but you must bring me works, to wit, broken, clean and changed hearts, and the like; this is a mere bargain and sale. In Romans 4:4, you shall find plainly and clearly, how the Apostle directly overthrows the being of a gift upon this supposition; if it could be received, that a man must bring anything to his justification, he plainly affirms, a gift ceases to be a gift when any such thing comes in. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt;" mark, I pray you, well, "to him that worketh;" that is, would you bring your humiliations, your prayers, &c., as conditions that God may perform his covenant? Do you bring anything in the world, and work any inherent righteousness? Then saith the Apostle, the reward, that is, the accomplishment of the covenant, is not reckoned of grace; if you bring works, the gift ceases to be a gift, it must be reckoned to be a debt. Either then you must lay down all works, and let them cease in the business of partaking of Christ, or else you must conclude you must not receive Christ of grace, but of debt; and the Apostle doth make it more clear, "and if by grace, {that is by gift; for grace and gift, you must understand are all one; grace is nothing but the favour of God freely, and of his own accord communicated, and if by grace,} then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." {Rom.11:6} If you bring grace unto works, or works unto grace; either the one or the other, or both, all is made void; as much as to say, these two things are inconsistent, they cannot stand together, that we should partake of Christ through grace and works both; they will not stand together; grace must stand alone, or works alone; for one directly overthrows the other.

And, beloved, to speak freely to you of these work-mongers, those buyers of Christ, that would bring something with them to partake of Christ; what would they bring? They say they will bring a good heart, or a changed life. I ask; what prize is this you

bring? Do you bring anything of your own, or that which is God's already? Suppose your hearts be never so purged and cleansed; what bring you to God? You bring that which already is his own; as much as to say, a man owes another a thousand pounds, and he will come and bring him this thousand pounds, for lands worth fifty pounds by the year. No, he must bring a thousand pounds more, if he will purchase the land; even so it is for a person to bring works for Christ, which works thou owest unto God already; no, first pay thy debt which thou owest, and then if thou hast any more, bring that unto God to purchase Christ withal. But alas, when you have done all, you are unprofitable servants; for all you have done is not yours, it was due from you before; how then can anything you do be a consideration to purchase Christ withal?

Moreover, you that will bring works, and, in consideration of them, expect a part in Christ; what are the works you bring? A whip you shall have as soon as a Christ, in regard of your works. Oh, the filthiness of all the works of men, as they work them! There is nothing but filthiness in them. "Yea doubtless, {saith Paul,} and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness." {Phil.3:8,9} Therefore, as it is most presumptuous pride in men, so it is the grossest ignorance that can be to dream of anything that they have do, or can do, in the partaking of Christ; they directly overthrow the nature of a gift; hast thou but one thought once, that God will accept thee in Christ, upon consideration that thou hast performed thus and thus; this very thought directly destroys Christ, considered as a gift; for if he be a gift, then he comes without any consideration whatsoever.

Vii The New Covenant Of Free Grace {2}

I will "give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." {Is.42:6,7}

In the next place, as it is against the nature of a gift, so God doth not expect, nor will accept of anything from men in consideration of Christ; and, for this, the Scriptures are plain and clear, that the Father expects nothing in the world of men; no one qualification or spiritual disposition, before, or upon the communicating of his Son Christ unto men. I will but name some few passages to clear this to you, that I may not seem to come in my own name, in this that I have delivered.

Consider, among other passages, that in Isaiah 55:1,2, for it is plain there, as you may see, that God looks for nothing in the world of men; be they what they will, be they in the worst condition, no matter what it is, they are the men to whom Christ offers himself. "Ho, every one that thirsteth;" {saith Christ;} that is, every one that hath but a mind to come to him, every one that would take him, may have him; "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Eat, but not buy; for it is said, "buy without money;" you may eat without price, and that which you shall eat is fatness. Mark what follows, "incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;" {vs.3;} here you see the Covenant mentioned. But what doth God require here in the Covenant? No money, no price; the Covenant runs all upon mercy; it is an everlasting Covenant indeed, and an everlasting Covenant of mercy. Now mercy is the doing a thing only and merely of gift; if a man will forgive a debtor, and ask nothing of him, then he is a merciful man; so far as men give, so far are they merciful; so far as they sell, there is no mercy in that. But here is neither money, nor price, nor any thing at all in consideration of the Covenant. {Lk.7:42}

Likewise, in Hosea 14:4, God saith by the prophet, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is

turned away from him;" he will love you freely, that is the term; he will ask nothing for that good he will do unto you, it shall be freely; and what is more free than gift?

Look also into that notable place, worthy of all consideration, Ephesians, chapter 2, where the Apostle speaks most admirably sweetly to this point of giving and communicating Christ, and all that is Christ's unto men, merely of grace, merely of gift, without consideration of anything in the world; and there you have the reason, why God will do it merely of gift, and upon no other ground or cause at all, {in vs.4,} saying, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," {here is the great principle that gives being to all that follows} "even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved;" now mark what follows, "and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus; for by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Here you see how notably the Apostle takes off all things in the world, whereby man may imagine to move God to show kindness, and give his Christ unto them; and attributes all to the riches of God's grace because of that "love wherewith he loved us." Hence it is that he bestows Christ by grace; "and by this grace are we saved, and that not of ourselves, not of our works, lest any should boast."

I will not recite many places; one more, and then I have done with this. Look into the last of the Revelations, and you shall see Christ is so a gift passed over unto men, that God looks for, asks, requires nothing of men to their partaking of him; in verse 17, "let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." No matter for bringing of anything with you; have you a mind to him? Take him freely, and know that God scorns to make a sale of his Son. If men take him as a deed of gift, well and good; if they will have him upon other terms, God never means to part with him. I tell you, could you bring angelical perfection and obedience, and present that

unto the Father as a motive to him to bestow his Christ upon you; if you dare offer the most perfect righteousness in the world for Christ; I say, you shall be accursed for it. "But though we, {saith the Apostle,} or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." {Gal.1:8} Any other gospel, than salvation, and participation of Christ, by grace and free gift; for that is the doctrine he had established before, and, through the whole epistle to the Galatians, doth maintain; let such person be accursed, saith Paul. And concerning those that will preach any other doctrine, or will establish any righteousness of man, and pervert the people of God from the sincerity of the doctrine and gospel they have received; the Apostle is so eager against them, that he breaks out into this expression, "I would they were even cut off, which trouble you," in the same Epistle, {5:12,} and upon the self-same ground we have in hand, he thus expresses himself, and why? Because they overthrew the great intent of the Lord, and those great thoughts he hath of himself; namely, that the world may see what a God of grace he is. If a man comes with works, towards the enjoyment of Christ, he overthrows the grace of God, and frustrates the great end for which God sent Christ into the world; for as you see it plainly there in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the place before mentioned, the Lord therefore comes to give Christ, to set forth "the praise of the glory of his free grace."

Secondly, this Gift {Christ I mean} given as a Covenant, imports unto you, that as the Father looks for nothing in men to partake of Christ, so also it doth imply, there is nothing in men, though never so vile, that can debar a person from a part in this Christ. Some will not have Christ, except they can pay for him; others dare not meddle with Christ, because they are so vile and wretched creatures that they think it impossible that Christ should belong to such wretched persons as they are. You know not {saith one} what an abominable sinner I am; you look upon others, but their sins are but ordinary; but mine are of a deep dye, and I shall die in them; the rebellion of my heart, is another kind of rebellion than is in others.

Beloved, let me tell you freely from the Lord; let men deem you as they will, and make yourself as bad as you can, I tell you, from the Lord, and I will make it good, there is not that sinfulness that can be imagined in a creature, that can be able to separate or debar any of you from a part in Christ; even, while you are thus sinful, Christ may be your Christ. Nay, I go further; suppose one person, in this congregation, should not only be the vilest sinner in the world, but should have all the sins of others, besides what he himself hath committed; if all these were laid upon the back of him, he should be a greater sinner than now he is; yet, if he should bear all the sins of others as I said, there is no bar to this person, but Christ may be his portion. Christ "bore the sins of many," {saith the text,} but he bare them not as his own, he bare them for many. Suppose the many, that are sinners, should have all their sins translated to one in particular; still there is no more sin than Christ died for; though they be all collected together. If other men's sins were translated upon you, and they had none, then they needed no Christ; all the need they have of Christ, were translated to you, and then the whole of Christ's obedience should be yours. Do but observe the strain of the Gospel, and you shall find that no sin in the world can be a bar to hinder a person from having a part in this Christ that is given; look upon the condition of persons {as they are revealed in the Gospel} to whom Christ is reached out; and the consideration of their persons will plainly show to you, that there is no kind of sinfulness that can bar a person from having a part in Christ.

Look into Ezekiel, chapter 6, quite through; the person is there considered in a state of blood, of menstruousness, of vileness and greatest filthiness that can be supposed. "None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and

I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a Covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." {Ez.16:5,6,8} When "no eye could pity" such a person, or do any good to him; "I passed by thee," {saith Christ} and "thy time was the time of love;" yea I "sware unto thee, and entered into a Covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." Construe this in a spiritual sense and conceive of a spiritual estate of filth that is proportionalable to a natural estate of filth. That very time of the vilest of our spiritual filthiness is the time of Christ's love, when he enters into Covenant. Yea, but sure the case is altered, before Christ actually swears. No; "then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly wished away thy blood." When? Even then when "I sware unto thee, and entered into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." First, he did sware and then he did wash them; and not wash them, and then sware unto them, and enter into Covenant with them. First, "I entered into Covenant with thee, then washed I thee with water, and then put I jewels upon thee, &c." The first thing he doth is that he enters into Covenant, and the people become his people, and then he takes them in hand and washes and purges them, and not before.

Consider Christ's own expression. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." {Lk.19:10} "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." {Lk.5:32} "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." {Mt.9:12} Here still the persons are considered in the worst condition, {as some might think} rather than in the best. Our Saviour is pleased to express himself in a direct contrary way to the opinion of men. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." The poor publican that had nothing to plead for himself went away more justified than the proud Pharisee that pleaded with God; "I thank thee that I am not such an one."

Men think righteousness brings them near to Christ; but beloved righteousness is that which puts a man away from Christ.[43] Stumble not at the expression, for it is the clear truth of

43 When it is trusted to, and depended upon, and put in the room of Christ and his righteousness; or when it is brought to fit a man for Christ, and give him a right and

the Gospel; not simply doing of service and duty, doth put away from Christ; but upon the doing of duty and service, to expect acceptance with Christ, or participation in Christ, this kind of righteousness is the only separation between Christ and a people; and whereas sinfulness in the world can debar a people, their righteousness may debar them as well.

I need not tell you, what I have so often mentioned, that there must be a believing in him that justifies the ungodly; {Rom.4:5,6;} what can you look for of an ungodly person? If there can be any bar in the world to hinder a man from taking Christ, you would think it should be ungodliness; it is the ground of most, and all men's fears. But if the term ungodliness be not bad enough, consider, Christ goes further, even unto rebellion; for he hath received gifts for the rebellious. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." {Ps.68:18}

But some may be ready to say to me, though God be never so free in giving Christ unto men; yet they may never have a part in him, except they have hands to take and receive him. I answer, I beseech you consider, and I answer peremptorily, that though men have no hands to take Christ, yet may they receive him. I will clear this a little to you, first by illustration, or by way of similitude; a poor indigent person is speechless, he hath never a tongue; he is handless, he hath never a hand; he cannot ask with the tongue, he cannot take with the hand; if you have a mind to give, I ask, can you not give to such a person, because he hath not a tongue to speak, nor a hand to take? You may behold, and see the pitiful case of such a man, and your compassions may be stirred in you; and whereas he cannot put a garment upon his own naked back, yet you may provide raiment, and put it upon his back with your hands, as well as if he had put it on himself; and thus God deals in bestowing Christ upon men. We are dumb and cannot speak, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," saith the Apostle, {Rom.8:26,} but God being rich in compassion, he beholds our miserableness; his own bowels stir him up. Although

claim to him, and his benefit. Gill.

there be no language in the creature to move him; yet out of these bowels of his, he will show pity and mercy to us, and reach out his Christ, to those that have no hands to receive him, no faith to believe in him. It is the Lord that puts this Christ on the back of those persons on whom he hath pity and compassion. {Is.61:10} I say, that although we have no hand, yet the Lord puts his Christ upon us; so it is not we that put him on, but the Lord that puts him upon us.

Secondly, to resolve the case more fully and clearly, observe a distinction very needful to be observed and considered; there is a twofold receiving of Christ; there is, first, a passive recipiency; and secondly, there is an active recipiency.[44]

First, there is a passive receiving of Christ, and that is, so that Christ is received without any hands; but in an active receiving of him, he is not received without hands; you will say, what is this passive receiving of Christ? I answer, a passive receiving of Christ, is just such a receiving of him, as when a froward patient takes a purge, or some bitter physic; he shuts his teeth against it, but the physician forceth his mouth open, and pours it down his throat, and so it works against his will, by the over-ruling power of one over him, that knows it is good for him. Thus I say, there is a passive recipiency, or receiving of Christ, which is the first receiving of him; when Christ comes by the gift of the Father to a person, whilst he is in the stubbornness of his own heart, being froward and cross; and the Father forces open the spirit of that man, and pours in his Son in spite of the receiver.[45] There is such

31 And an excellent distinction it is; the learned Hoornbeeck takes notice of it, and has these words concerning it; "neither do we reject some distinctions of theirs [i.e. Dr. Crisp, and others, called Antinomians] as of the reception of Christ first passive, then active." Gill.

45 This is to be understood of the state and condition, in which a man is, when God comes first to work upon him, in which he is passive; and the simile made use of, of a physician forcing a man's mouth open, and pouring physic against his will, is intended to illustrate, and does illustrate, the enmity and rebellion of the heart of man against Christ and his grace; and shows how disagreeable, to the carnal mind, are the methods which God takes when he first works upon it, either by afflictive providences, or by letting the Law into the conscience, which works wrath there; and not, as D. W. suggests, in his Gospel Truth, pg. 101, as if men were said to receive Christ against their wills; for, as the Doctor after observes, when Christ has entered into the soul, and has revealed himself, and shown it his excellency and his beauty, it embraces him, and

a kind of recipiency mentioned in scripture. “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded.” {Jer.31:18,19} Mark how Ephraim {who is the representative of the church} stands affected and disposed; when God comes first to tame and break the spirit of Ephraim, God is fain to get upon Ephraim, as an horse-rider is fain to get upon an unruly horse, that was never broken; he must fetter him upon all four, that he may stand still before he get up. So God must fetter Ephraim before he can get up, before he can tame him; “I was as a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke,” nothing but kicking and spurning at first; afterwards Ephraim becomes more gentle; “when I was converted, I smote upon my thigh, and was confounded;” but before, Ephraim was a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Hence it is that the entrance of Christ into a person is attributed unto the power of Christ. “Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power;” the power of the Lord must overcome a person, before Christ can take a possession of him, in regard of the crossness of the spirit of man to the pleasure of Christ.

At the first, then, there may be a passive receiving of Christ, by which Christ may enter and doth enter into the spirit of man, though the soul reach not forth the hand to take him in; but rather on the contrary part, fight against him by keeping him from entering; {Acts 9:3;} but now when this Christ is poured into the spirit of a man by the power of the Lord, then he begins to work, to break, and to tame the spirit, to be at his own beck and pleasure; when Christ hath once revealed himself and made the soul to behold his beauty, and acquainted it with his excellency, then it begins to embrace him, and to bold him fast, and will not let him go.

Here comes in the second act of receiving Christ, when we, take him, perceiving that he is a friend and coming for good,

holds him fast; when his power comes upon it, it is made willing to receive him, whom, before, it had a dislike of, and an aversion to. Gill.

and that there is no good but by him. {Micah 6:6,7} Christ is considered as given of the Father; and being given, the Father hath no regard to anything that a man can do for him, or anything he can do against him. But it may be, before I leave this, you will ask, is not unbelief a bar to have a part in Christ?

I answer, it is a bar to hinder the manifestation of Christ in the spirit; but it is not a bar to hinder one from having a part in Christ, on whom God doth bestow him. It is true, that you, nor I, can say by experience that Christ is ours, until we believe; for as long as we continue in total unbelief, we cannot conclude to our own spirits that Christ is ours; but unbelief is not simply a bar to the bestowing of Christ, to such a person; he bestows him without any regard to belief, or unbelief; if unbelief should be a bar to hinder Christ from being bestowed upon men, where is the man to whom Christ should be bestowed? There is no person under heaven considered simply as ungodly, and under the notion of ungodliness, but he is considered as an unbeliever, as well as a sinner in other respects; so that to the Father's giving of Christ, unbelief is not a bar; only to the inward satisfaction of the soul and spirit, unbelief is a bar; a soul cannot be resolved till it doth believe.

III. And so now I come to consider the third thing I proposed, namely. What it is for Christ to be given to open the blind eyes? There are two things very remarkable in it, that he is given to do this; for hence I infer, and the thing itself will clearly bear it. First, that Christ is actually passed over to a soul, and a possession of Christ is delivered unto persons, before ever their blind eyes are opened, or they come out of prison; that is, before they have any gracious qualifications whatsoever; and this is a truth that follows upon the former, that Christ himself is the first spiritual gift that the Father doth bestow upon any, before there be wrought any opening of the eyes, which is the first of all gracious qualifications wrought in a man.

Secondly, that the opening of the eyes, and bringing the prisoners out of prison, is the sole work of Christ; none doth this business but Christ alone when he is once given. The first will

need a little clearing, and thereby the second will be sufficiently evidenced, being a truth of very great concern, and yet seldom seriously considered; I say, that Christ is actually given and passed over to men, and made really theirs, before ever there be any gracious qualifications put into the soul of such a man. I say, as before, observe this caution, I speak of God's giving Christ unto men, not of the manifestation of him unto a man to be his; there is, and must be faith, as I said before, for the manifestation of him to be ours; but there is no qualification wrought in the heart of any person, before Christ be actually passed over, and made his in the Covenant. Now, I say, Christ is given and passed over to such a person, before he has any gracious qualifications; I do not mean, as some do, that God did actually decree Christ, unto such and such, before he put any qualifications in them; this is a truth indeed; but I say further, that God gives actual possession of Christ, and Christ takes possession of that person, before there be any qualifications wrought in him; now Christ is given, not only to perform some common acts of God's providence, but he is given as the Covenant itself; he enters, and actually justifies a person, before any qualification be wrought in him.

Now I shall endeavour to clear this, by all possible evidence I can; as the Scripture is plain for it, in Isaiah 61:1,2,8, and so forward; there you shall see that Christ is actually given unto men, before any gracious qualifications whatsoever be wrought in them. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me," saith Christ; for they are his words, as he himself applies them, in the sermon that he preached. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." {Lk.4:18,19} Observe it, I pray you, here Christ hath a business to do in the world; which is, "to bind up the brokenhearted;" and, the Lord hath anointed him to this business. What is that anointing? The Lord hath separated him, designed him to it; and according to his designation, places him where he may do it; this is meant by

anointing. Now, when a man is set apart, and sent about such a business; he must be there corporally or virtually before that is done, which he is sent to do; he is sent to do a thing, therefore he must be there where it is to be done; a man is not said to do a thing, when it is done before he come; if Christ be sent to bind up the brokenhearted, and if it be his business; certainly they are not bound up before he comes to bind them; and if he comes to bind them up, then he is present before they are bound up.

But, peradventure, you will say, by this text, here are broken hearts first, before Christ be sent to bind them up; therefore there must be broken hearts before Christ come to the soul. To this I answer, that a broken heart is to be considered in a double sense, either, first, simply for a heart undone; or, secondly, for one sensible of its own undoing. You know, men are said to be undone, and broke, when their estates are broke, and their credit cracked; and, they may be said to be broke, when they have examined their own books, and find that they are, and so seek to their creditors to make agreement; they may be considered as broken, supposing and considering what their condition is simply in itself, as they are undone in it; or else, they apprehend themselves to be undone, and so make agreement.

Now, with these two kinds of brokenness of heart considered, I answer that it is most certainly true in the first sense, that there is a broken heart, before Christ is considered as present to bind it up; that is men are really undone, before he comes to restore them; but these persons are not sensible of their own brokenness of heart, until Christ comes and makes them sensible of it.

Therefore, if you will speak of the sense of breaking, I flatly affirm, that Christ is actually given, and is come unto the soul, before sensibleness be wrought in the soul. Mark but the Covenant as it is recited, and who is it that deals with the heart of man to take away the stoniness of it, and to give a meltingness unto it? "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my spirit within you, &c." {Ezek.36:26,27} "I will – I will, &c;" who is

that? It is he that did obtain a more excellent ministry, "by how much also he is the Mediator of a better Covenant;" even the Mediator of this Covenant, and it is he that takes away the stony heart; and, if he breaks it, how can there be said to be a broken heart, before Christ comes to do it?

Therefore, in brief, know this, that Christ is sent unto men, as to bind up their hearts, when they are broken, so graciously to break them, when they are hard; first, he breaks them, then he binds them up; Christ is sent "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." People think by their humiliations, sorrows, mourning and obedience, and such like, to get Christ; but is plain that the very spirit of mourning is the work of Christ upon a person, and that he is present to work it too. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;" {Zech.12:10;} who was it that poured this spirit of grace and supplication upon them? Christ, who was pierced, and on whom they shall look that had pierced him. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" this is he that poured out the spirit of supplication and mourning; so, if it be Christ that was pierced, as is plain, then it is also plain that he poured out the spirit of grace, supplication, and mourning; how then can they mourn before Christ comes, when it is he, after he is come, that doth effect this very thing?

Object any qualification whatsoever, and it will appear most evident and plain, that it is Christ himself, after he is come, that works it; even faith itself, which is called the radical grace of all graces, is not given until Christ himself be given men, who works this very faith. "Looking unto Jesus {saith the Apostle} the author and finisher of our faith." {Heb.12:2} Christ is the author; what faith can there be then till he comes to work it?

Consider Psalm 68:18 compared with Ephesians 4:8, and you shall plainly see that Christ is given unto men before there be any qualifications of any grace whatsoever in them. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast

received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious," saith the Psalmist; "thou hast given gifts unto men," saith the Apostle; put them both together and we see that Christ received for and gave gifts unto rebellious men. Consider, I pray, what gracious dispositions and qualifications are considerable in rebellious men; for as they are rebellious, there can be none considered; but Christ received for, and gave gifts to the rebellious; therefore, he is given, and accordingly gives whatsoever any person hath before he hath anything.

There are many notable arguments in Scripture most absolutely establishing this truth; that Christ is given and made over unto men before they have any qualification whatsoever. Christ is called "the head of the body, the church, and the beginning." {Col.1:18} These two metaphors illustrate and establish this truth.

First, Christ is the beginning. He that is the beginning of all things is before all things; not only in the being of nature before all things, but actually present before all things be begun. He that is the builder of the house, doth not come after it is begun to be built; but he is present at the place before a stone is laid, because he is the man that must lay it, he is the beginner of it; and if he be the beginning, whatsoever is begun, is after him that is the beginning.

Secondly, Christ is the head. This is the other metaphor, whereby is set forth, that Christ must upon necessity be in the soul, be actually passed over unto men, before they can have any gracious qualifications. A head is the fountain of all animal and sensitive spirits, and of all motion; without a head a man cannot hear, see, walk, feel, stir, nor do anything, seeing all these operations come from the head. Consider the body as headless and all the senses are absent, and without a head nothing is done. Christ is the head of his church; {so saith the Apostle;} that is, he is the fountain of all spiritual sense and motion. You may as soon conceive that a man is able to see whilst he hath not a head; as to think, a man can have spiritual eyes, whether the eye of faith to behold Christ, or the eyes of mourning to lament

one's wretchedness, before there be actually the presence and conjunction of Christ the head, unto such a body. Beloved, to think a man can have any spiritual sight before Christ be actually united to the soul, is all one, as for a man to think to see before he has eyes. The eyes are placed in the head; both the organs, faculties and spirits all are in the head. How can a man see that hath neither eyes nor spirits to feed them; which he hath not, while he hath not a head, where all these are planted. Christ must be the eye, and be present to give sight; therefore, the Scripture expressly says that Christ is given "for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, &c.;" {Is.42:6,7;} and if to open them, then they are not opened before he gives them sight.

And, thirdly, as Christ is called a Head, and a Beginning; so also Life, frequently in the Scripture. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6} Can a man be an active creature, before there be life breathed into him? The Lord, {saith the text} at the creation, breathed into man the breath of life, and so man became a living soul. He was like a stone, till he received life; but now, saith the Apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." {Gal.2:20} "By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." {I Cor.15:10} Paul was an active soul. How? By the grace of God. That is, as a body, without a soul is dead; so every person, in spiritual actions, is wholly dead, till Christ the soul of the soul be infused into him, to animate and enliven him. I shall not spend more time in urging more arguments; though I might be large to show that Christ is the first thing given unto us, before all other whatsoever. For if this light be not enough, we must wait till the Lord in his time will reveal his truth.

IV. And now in a word or two consider, who they are, to whom Christ is given to be a Covenant. All this is good news, will some say, to those unto whom it is sent. Many thousands cry out, Oh, but it is none of my portion, nor my portion, that Christ should be given as a Covenant to me.

I shall not be large in this, though some may expect it; the text will tell in part, who those are to whom Christ is given for a Covenant; to wit, the people and the Gentiles, one, as well as another. God gives Christ to men without respect of persons, to Jews and Gentiles. You shall find through the whole course of the Scripture, the persons to whom Christ is exhibited are still expressed in the most general terms; if a man would know for whom he came, it is answered, Christ came to seek and to save those that are lost; in due time, he came to die for the ungodly; and that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Scripture runs upon this strain; why then should any man come and cry, "Christ died not for me, he is not given for me." Why, art thou a convinced sinner? He was given for thee, if thou art truly saying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The king puts forth a proclamation, and in it he pardons all thieves; what mad or foolish thief will say, Oh, but the king doth not mean me, he may mean others, but not me! Why, he means thieves in general, he excepts none; why shouldest thou say, not me? If there be the name of thieves in general, without particular mentioning of some, they will come in, and take their portion. Beloved, so Christ deals with men, he is given to the people, to the Gentiles; art thou of the people? Art thou of the Gentiles? If thou art, why is he not given to thee? Nay more, it is the people and Gentiles considered as sinners?

But some will be ready to say, you know that Christ is not given to all people, and all Gentiles; for some do miscarry, and possibly I may be among them, that do miscarry; but how shall I know that I am among the number of such sinners that shall not miscarry, and that my portion is in this Christ? Beloved, here observe by the way, now we are speaking of knowing whether Christ be mine, or no, not simply of Christ's being ours, but of his manifestation, or of knowing him to be ours, how shall I know it? You will say, there are labyrinths, in which a man may walk, and by hap may chance to hit the right, in the finding of this great truth, so much searched after, how a man may know whether

Christ be his or no? To lead you in a plain and sure way; the best way for any man to know whether Christ be his or no, is to consider the conveyance in which he is made over to men; see the terms of conveyance, and according to these terms, such is the security of your title. Now the terms of conveyance {as I have often told you} are only such as in deed of gift, and a deed of gift universally exhibited and reached out. Therefore, I must tell you, there is no better way to know your portion in Christ, than upon the general tender of the gospel, to conclude absolutely that he is yours, and so, without any more ado, to take him, as tendered to you, on his word; {Is.55:1;} and this taking of him, upon a general tender, is the greatest security in the world that Christ is yours.[46] Say unto your souls {and let not this be contradicted, seeing Christ hath reached out himself to sinners as sinners;} my part is as good as any mans; set down thy rest here; question it not, but believe it; it is as good security as God can make thee; he hath promised, venture thy soul upon it, without seeking for further security. But, some will say, he doth not belong to me; why not to thee? Christ belongs to sinners, as sinners; and if there be no worse than sinfulness, rebellion, and enmity in thee, he belongs to thee, as well as to any in the world; and there is nothing at all that can give thee a certainty that he is thine, but receiving him on these terms.[47] "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;

46 This is the principal passage on which the Dutch Professor Hoornbeeck has laid the charge of holding universal redemption to the Doctor, concluding, from this general tender, or offer of Christ to all, that he held the universal satisfaction of Christ for all, and that all have an equal portion in it; from whence they might be assured Christ as theirs, and not from any condition in themselves; and, indeed the universal offer, cannot be supported without supposing universal redemption; which those, who are fond of, and yet profess particular redemption, would do well to consider. Gill.

47 This is putting it upon a much better foot than the general tender; which is no security to any, of Christ being his; nor even general redemption itself, since all have not a portion in him, or are saved by him; but, Christ dying for the worst and chief of sinners, and his promise to receive, and his actually receiving them as such, are the best security, and on which a poor sinner, under a deep sense of sin may rely; and be encouraged to apply to Christ, and lay hold upon him as his own Saviour. See the last paragraph of the next sermon, where the Doctor mentions a better security than the general tender. Gill.

which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." {Jn.1:11-13}

Christ receiveth sinners, as sinners; he never shut out one of all those thousands that came upon the tender of the gospel; he never put any by; "but to as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God." Bring me any one instance in the whole book of God, of any one that hath come to Christ, and taken him upon the tender of the gospel, and yet he hath put this person by. It is true, in a shallow matter, concerning a bodily cure, the woman comes to Christ, and at the first, he would not hear, then he calls her a dog; yet before they parted, Christ not only accepts the woman, but breaks out into admiration, "Oh woman, great is thy faith!" But, I say, in the business of partaking of Christ, show me an instance of any in all the Book of God that have ventured upon the general tender of Christ, which was rejected. {Rev.22:17} If there be no example, in all the Scripture, from whence fetch you this bitterness of your own spirits that you may not, that you dare not, close with Christ?

But, you will say to me, if this taking of Christ be the best security, how shall I know whether I believe or no? Or how shall I know whether this my taking is not a counterfeit, but a solid, substantial, real, taking of Christ.

I answer, by the reality of the thing. Do you it indeed? If you do it indeed, it is a real taking. If a man should ask you; how do you know the sun shines? The light of it shows itself; and, by its light, we know it shines. How shall I know I believe? There is a light in faith that discovers itself unto men. The soul that really closes with Christ may conclude that he doth. If you give sixpence to a poor man, and then ask him, how do you know I have given you it, and that you have it? Why, saith he, I have it in my hand, and find, and feel that I have it. So, ask your hearts this question, how do I know I believe in Christ? Do I cast my heart upon this truth? Do I receive it as one that I do believe, or do I reject it, or will not receive it? Then I do not believe; but if you sit down, and rest upon it, and receive it, and do in reality believe it; then you may absolutely conclude Christ is yours. In respect

of time, I cannot amplify any further; but, I hope, for the present, this will give satisfaction. A word or two for application, and so I will conclude.

Is this a truth, as hath been by Scripture proved to you that Christ is given a Covenant to men, to open their blind eyes? Then it is plain, they begin at the wrong end of the bottom who begin to wind up at the graciousness of their own spirits, from thence to have comfort. If you begin at any other end than at Christ to get grace and comfort, you do as they do that take the inmost end of the bottom of the thread, and begin to ravel there; so that little or no work is done, but much and many a knot, and broken ends made, and the work quite spoiled; whereas, if they began at the utmost end of the bottom, it would have run without disturbance.

Beloved, Christ is given to open men's blind eyes; go whither you will, you shall never have your eyes spiritually opened, except you go to him; Oh, what a do is here with men, or in men, with breaking their own hearts, and forsaking their sins! And whither do they run? They run to their inherent righteousness, their qualifications, their prayers, their tears, their humiliations, sorrows, reformations, universal obedience, and the like; but is this to run to free grace and free mercy in Christ? Nay, Christ, alas, is never thought of; he is clean forgotten, and wholly neglected, and not considered all this while. Here is ploughing with a wooden plough; here is a working upon a dead horse, or rather with one. What is in the heart of a man to plough up the rock of his own heart? No marvel that you sweat and toil and moil all the day long, and all lies in the same case it did; there is no strength to bring forth; because you go in your own, or the strength of the creature, and not in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know that when a pump is dry, men use not to stand labouring at it till they sweat; but they first come, and fetch a bucket of water, and pour the water into it, and then they fall to pumping, and by virtue of the water poured, there comes more water up, and by continual pumping they fetch out abundance; so your hearts are dry things, there is no sap, no moisture, no life in

them; Christ must first be poured in, before you can get anything out; wherefore then do you stand labouring and tugging in vain? Oh, stay no longer, go to Christ; it is he that must break thy rocky heart, before the plough can come over it, or at least enter into it. As I told you before, so I tell you again, you must consider Christ as freely given unto you by the Father, even before you can believe.

There is a story of Ebedmelech; the black-moor in Jeremiah, {Jeremiah, chapter 38,} who by his interest and favour with the king, got leave to go to the dungeon to Jeremiah to fetch him out; he carries ropes with him, lets them down and causeth Jeremiah to put them under his arms, and round about him; now Jeremiah by holding fast the ropes doth not pull him into the pit, but he pulls Jeremiah out of the pit to himself. I speak this by way of illustration. Christ is our Ebedmelech with the Father, the great King of Glory; his dealing prevails that he may have liberty to pluck us poor Jeremiah's out of the pit and dungeon of sin and Satan, of misery and destruction. How doth he this? He doth not first send ropes, and then come after, but goes and carries them with him; that is, Christ doth not send faith first to believers, and then comes after as drawn by it; no, but he comes and brings it with him, and he, being present, lets it down to them; and when they have it, they do not draw Christ down to them by it, but holding it fast, he draws them up to himself. So here is not faith first, and then Christ; but Christ comes first and gives faith to apprehend and lay hold upon him. Consider therefore, Christ as your Ebedmelech, who comes and reaches himself out to draw you up, and being first present, reaches out faith to you, by which you may hold; so Christ fetches you out of the pit.

Wherefore {to draw to a conclusion} remember this, as you run to Christ, so shall you prosper in everything you take in hand; all the business that Christ undertakes shall go on a-main, whilst all that the creature undertakes shall stand at a stop. Make trial, begin but with Christ; take him along with you in your entrance upon anything, and you have a mighty Counsellor to guide and direct you, for so Christ is called; and good counsel, you know, is

very useful for a prosperous expedition of things. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." {Is.9:6} Again, you have a tower and refuge fully secure to retreat to in case of extremity or of over-mastership. It was once a prime piece of policy, when in combat with an enemy, to make sure of some good fort, and to maintain that; so that if the enemy be too strong, they may know whither to go to be hid and saved from the present danger; and without such a refuge they are all liable to be cut off; so do you begin with Christ; make sure of him when you enter into the field of the world; get but this fort, and you have a place of retreat upon all occasions, where there is most certain security, which the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against, for Christ is that impregnable rock; but this is not all.

Christ is also the water of life; take but Christ along with you, and then in all your travels no sooner do you begin to faint, but there is living water at hand; you may drink of it, and your spirits shall be refreshed and revived. What shall I say more to you? It is Christ that oils the wheels of your chariots, and makes you run the ways of God's commandments? It is he that fills the sails; you must needs lie at a calm, if he be not present to blow in them. Take Christ with you, and you have the wind at command. Many a mariner would give the world to have such a privilege as to command the natural winds, and to make them blow when and which way he listeth; he would never then lie wind-bound. Beloved, you that have Christ have the wind in your fists; you may be carried to any port you will. If you have him, you shall have a swift gale, and shall sail a-main by his power. Therefore, if Christ be poured forth, and a gift unto men, and so cheap that you may have him for nothing, only receiving him, let this be your everlasting cry and song, none but Christ, none but Christ! Or rather, in the language of the Apostle, "I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

Viii Christian Liberty No Licentious Doctrine

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free

indeed." {Jn.8:36}

Our Saviour here gives a hint to his Apostles, that they should not look to fare better than their Master. He speaks of hard usage in the world; for he came into it to fulfill a gracious and glorious ministry, bringing from the bosom of his Father the great and unsearchable love the Father had from everlasting in his thoughts towards his own dear ones; and so he takes all opportunities and advantages to publish the glad tidings of salvation to the sons of men; yet met he with much opposition. But although Christ knew full well that there were many Cavillers that laid snares to trap him in his words, and that they frequented the common assemblies where he preached, to catch something from him, whereby they might have a cause at least to upbraid him, and bring him into danger; I say, although Christ knew there were in all such assemblies some Scribes and Pharisees, and such like, yet for all this, when opportunity offered, he was graciously pleased to use much freedom of speech to them; and though some were carping and caviling at his words and his person, yet some there were to whom the glad tidings of salvation did belong, who by his ministry received them, and so were comforted. It seems it fell out thus with Christ, in the two former chapters, and this out of which I have taken my text; for in these he was graciously pleased to hold forth the light of the glad tidings of salvation, wherein he used, as I said before, much freedom and boldness of speech, which occasioned the adversaries of the Gospel to vent their poison, and spit the venom of their malice against him. He could no sooner speak a word of grace, but presently they were upon the back of him.

These three chapters contain in them nothing else but a continued dispute between Christ and his enemies, intermingled with most admirable, sweet, and gracious expressions of him to his own people. In verse 30, alter a large dispute and discourse, the Holy Ghost is pleased to tell us that many did believe in Christ, upon the words that he had spoken. Here you see a gracious effect upon some, that Christ knew before hand; upon which he took encouragement, notwithstanding all the adversaries' opposition,

to be bold in speaking; and perceiving that his Gospel took effect upon some, nay, many of the people, he turns his discourse from these carpers, with whom he had so long disputed before, and begins to frame his speech to the capacity and condition of the new converts and believers; therefore, in verse 31, 32, our Saviour delivers himself to them in this manner; "If ye continue in my word," saith he, "then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Now, although it be apparent that Christ directs this speech of his to the new believers, yet in verse 36 the cavilers carp and cavil, whether wittingly or ignorantly I cannot say; they must needs have Christ to speak this passage unto them; and they presently, in a hot and captious way, reply to him; whereas he had said that they should be free, and the truth should make them free; that is, as many of them as did believe; they presently retorted upon him, why? "We are Abraham's seed, we were never in bondage;" how can we be made free? They might have held their tongues, Christ never meant them, he never spake to them; and though they said, "they were never in bondage," in bondage they were, and in bondage like to be. However, Christ did not speak to them, but to believers; yet they will not leave him so, they will have a fling at him, therefore he answers their objection again. In the 33rd verse, they made use of this argument to assert their freedom; said they, "we be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" What, doth he talk of making us free? He takes off this recoil with a two-edged sword. There is a double answer to the argument they make use of. First, therefore, Christ shows what the liberty is and wherein it stands, that he speaks of. Secondly, he shows that their plea is not good, for their being Abraham's seed was not a plea sufficient for their freedom.

First, Christ shows what true freedom is, that he thus speaks of; it is namely this "abiding in the house forever."

Secondly, he shows that to be Abraham's seed is not enough to make them free; for the answer of Christ is thus; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin; and

the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever;" {vs.34,35;} as much as to say, Suppose you are Abraham's seed, yet if you commit sin, for all this you are servants, you are in bondage to sin; and, as long as you are, you have no liberty. All freedom consists in this especially, that Christ speaks of, that to the free indeed there will be an abiding in the house forever. The Apostle, {Gal.4:21-31,} illustrates to us the nature of this freedom that Christ speaks of in this place, and indeed, sets forth the substance of it; "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" You that desire to be under the Law, what saith it? The Law speaks thus {saith he;} "Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman." These are a mystery; Agar signifies Mount-Sinai, in Arabia, which genders unto bondage. Now, Agar was the mother of Ishmael, but the seed of the promise is from above. The conclusion is this, saith the Apostle, "cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman;" but he that is free, is in the inheritance forever; the bond-woman, and her son, must not abide in the house forever, they must be cast out. Christ alludes to this, of Abraham's casting out of Ishmael; as much as to say, there may be those of the seed of Abraham, as Ishmael was, yet be cast out, being not the seed of the promise; they may be the seed of Abraham, but being the servants of sin, there is no abiding for them.

Now our Saviour having repelled and answered their arguments, he comes, in the words of my text, to show the rise and fountain from whence this freedom which he speaks of, springs, or takes its first beginning; "if the Son therefore make you free then are you free indeed."

The words I have read to you are an hypothetical proposition, or a conclusion stated upon a supposition and contain in them these particulars. First, the grace itself held out, and that is freedom. "If the Son make you free." Secondly, the original, or the cause of it; that is, the Son's making them so, "If the Son make you free." Thirdly, the quality of it, what kind of freedom it is; it is not a shadowy, or empty, useless freedom, but a substantial one, "then

are you free indeed." This hypothetical proposition reduced into a categorical conclusion is no more but this, they that the Son makes free, are free indeed.

Only there is one thing observable from the argument of Christ in this place that will add a word to this proposition. These Jews, that did dispute with Christ, they pretended that there was no way to full freedom, but by being born of Abraham; so their being the seed of Abraham gives them a complete freedom; now Christ takes them upon advantage; he will suppose with them in their sense, that if freedom were to be had by any outward privilege, it should be, by being Abraham's seed; if, therefore Abraham's freedom be no freedom, as indeed it is not, then there can be none, but by one that is above Abraham. Now, saith Christ, the Son shall make you free; as much as to say, Abraham, the freest person in the world, cannot make you free, much less can any other but the Son. So then, the proposition is this, that they alone are indeed free, who have their freedom from the Son of God; I say, they alone are free indeed, who are made free only by Christ; none in the world, nothing in the world can make free, but the Son of God.

Now, that we may suck, and be satisfied, at the breasts of consolation, {for there is the sincere milk of the word in it,} let us take briefly into our consideration these few particulars.

First, what the freedom is whereof Christ speaks in this place.

Secondly, how Christ makes free.

And if time shall serve; thirdly, who they are, that are thus made free by Christ.

I will begin with the first. What this freedom is whereof Christ speaks in this place. For clearing whereof, note, first, that freedom and liberty are terms of one and the same signification. It is all one to say that the Son makes free, or that the Son gives liberty. Both the Greek and the Latin are promiscuously translated, either free, or men at liberty. It is true, I confess, this word liberty, hath gotten an ill name in the world, partly through the abuse of liberty, and partly through the malignity of some

spirits, that strike even at the heart of Christ, through the sides of those that are Christ's; laying reproachful, ignominious and shameful names upon them of libertinism. Now, because liberty and freedom are thus brought into reproach and disgrace, the true freedom, which Christ hath purchased and given, requires some clearing, lest it perish and be lost in the rubbish of corrupt liberty; and so the people of God be jeered out of that which is their greatest portion.

I am ashamed to speak it, I would there were not occasion, that which is the very life and the sole comfort of the members of Christ Jesus, becomes such a reproach, through the malignity of the enemies of the Gospel of Christ, that the very believers themselves are almost ashamed to go under the name of that which is their greatest glory. To be called a Libertine is the most glorious title under heaven; take it for one that is truly free by Christ. To be made free by Christ, in proper construction, is no other but this, to be made a libertine by Christ; I do not say, to be made a libertine in the corrupt sense of it, but to be one in the true and proper sense of it. It is true indeed that Christ doth not give liberty unto licentiousness of life and conversation; of which we shall speak more by and by; but a real and true liberty Christ hath purchased, and given to all his members.

That we may the better understand therefore what this freedom is that Christ hath purchased and bestows upon believers; and thereby, save it from the reproach of corrupt and licentious liberty; understand, beloved, that there is a threefold liberty. First: Moral or civil. Secondly: Sensual and corrupt. Thirdly: Spiritual and divine.

First, Moral and civil liberty is that which these Jews speak of, {misinterpreting the sense of Christ} such as you used to have in your cities; when a man hath served out his time, he is a freeman, he hath the freedom of the city, he hath liberty to trade in it; so Paul understood liberty, when he spoke with the centurion; the centurion said that he bought it with a great deal of money; but saith Paul, I was so born; I was born a Roman. {Acts 22:28} But of this liberty Christ speaks not here.

Secondly, there is a corrupt liberty that the Apostle speaks of in Galatians 5:13, for there he tells us thus, that "ye have been called unto liberty;" but, saith he, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh." A licentious liberty is nothing else but this, namely, when men turn the grace of God into wantonness, and abusing the Gospel of Christ, continue in sin, that grace might abound. Unto which the Apostle affixes abhorrence; God forbid, saith he, that any man should make use of such a liberty as this. I am confident of it, and affirm boldly, there is not one man made free by Christ, that makes it his rule, namely, to be bold to commit sin with greediness, because of the redemption that is in the blood of Christ; but that Christ who hath redeemed from sin and wrath, hath also redeemed from a vain conversation; and there shall not be a making use of the grace of God, as emboldening and encouraging to break out into licentiousness. All that have this freedom purchased by Christ for them, have also the power of God in them, which keeps them that they break not out licentiously; the seed of God abides in them, that they cannot sin, as in I John 3:9, that is, they cannot sin after this fashion.[48]

Thirdly, there is a spiritual liberty; for of corrupt licentiousness Christ speaks not in the text neither; but of a spiritual freedom; and that it may be clear, he speaks of a spiritual freedom here, you may plainly perceive by the words going before; for whereas these Pharisees affirmed they were not in bondage; Christ proves they were, thus; "they were the servants of sin," {saith he,} "and he that is the servant of sin, abides not in the house for ever;" as much as to say, the bondage here, was such, as consisted in being under sin; so then, Christ here means a bondage and slavery under sin; the freedom, therefore, opposite to this, must needs be a spiritual freedom.

Now it will be worth our while to enquire, first, into the nature; and, secondly, into the quality of this spiritual freedom, that Christ brings with him to his own people.

First, for the nature of this freedom. The philosophers

48 This paragraph as well as a multitude of others, show that the Doctor was no friend to licentiousness, and what a madness it is to charge so worthy a person with holding licentious principles. Gill.

have a rule that is of very good use, for clearing of divine truths; "contraries illustrate each other." Freedom will be most clearly, or at least more clearly apparent unto us, by considering the contrary to freedom. The contrary to freedom is bondage; if we know what the bondage is that Christ speaks of, we shall better know what the freedom is.

We will awhile consider what bondage Christ speaks of here, to which he opposeth freedom, as I said before. The bondage he speaks of is a bondage under sin. Let us briefly consider what this is. This stands in these two things. First, an obligation unto, and under the curse of the Law, by reason of its transgression; and secondly, in the privation of all comfort and contentment, by reason of the same transgression.

First, I say, an obligation unto, and under the curse of the Law, by reason of transgressing it, that is the first part of bondage under sin. A person is then properly and truly under bondage, when by reason of his transgression, he can make no escape from under the curse of the Law, but must lie down to it, and be under the torment of it, as a bond-slave, even as a slave in the Turks galleys; though this man in his slavery, works ever so hard; {for of that he shall not want, work enough he shall have;} yet, if at any time he shall chance to slip or fall, whether it be through omission, or through mere infirmity and weakness, and want of strength; all his hard labour is nothing at all considered; but, when he fails in that insupportable bondage and task, he hath his stripes and blows. This, I say, is the true state of bondage, when there is cruelty and rigor, without any regard to the impossibility to go under the task; the load and blows are laid on with weight; no crying, no promises, no excuses, no pleas, though ever so reasonable, can be heard; but, as there is a fault committed, there must be stripes inflicted. So it is with a person in spiritual bondage; a man is then under the curse of the Law, by reason of his transgression, when doing what he can, {suppose as it should be,} yet, if he fail but in one thing, that which he doth is not regarded nor considered; neither is his ability to do no more, taken notice of; but, still as he slips, so the Law lays on stripes.

There are two things mainly to be considered that do mightily embitter the condition of a bondman who is under the curse of the Law because of his transgression. The first is this, the threatenings and menacings of the curse, incessantly following one upon the neck of another, with loud out-cries of bitterness against this soul transgressing. It is with a person in bondage to sin, under the curse of the Law for it, as it was with Job in respect of the afflictions that were upon him; one comes and brings him word that his oxen were taken away; he had no sooner done but another comes and tells him his sheep were lost; and, no sooner had he delivered his message, but another comes and tells him his camels were stolen; and no sooner had he done, but one comes and tells him his sons and daughters were slain; so one after another the messengers came thick upon him. It is just so with persons in bondage under the Law; it comes and threatens this curse; then it comes and threatens a second; and, no sooner is that ended, but it comes and threatens a third, crying out continually, Cursed, cursed, cursed, cursed. If the ears of the people were open to hear as much as the Law speaks, they would hear nothing else but a clang of curses belonging to him that is under it. As for instance, a man under the bondage of the Law for sin can hear nothing but this, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." {Gal.3:10} Beloved, there is no man, but in some respect or other, every act that he doth, hath some infirmity and failing in it; and, in that regard, the Law speaks, "Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the Law to do them." Thou canst no sooner pass from this act to another, but as soon as thou dost perform that second act, for the failings in it, the Law cries again; "Cursed art thou, for thou hast not continued in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them." So look into Romans 2, where there is a continued pealing out the Law to those that are in bondage under it; "tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;" {vs.9;} saving, that in Romans 3:19, the Apostle tells us that this cursedness, this tribulation and anguish is pronounced

by the Law only upon them that are under it; so then, it is without question that to them that are under it, tribulation, and anguish, and wrath, and vengeance, do belong.

Now it is a kind of death, a very torment to be under such continual menaces; to hear nothing but execrations; to hear nothing but curses and bitterness, nothing but indignation and wrath; Oh! What a hell is it upon earth, for a soul to receive this sentence! What bitterness is it for a malefactor that stands at the tribunal, to beat a judge, it may be, making a speech of two hours long to him, only reciting the extremity of the torment he shall endure for the crimes he hath committed! Every repetition or addition of torment, denounced and sentenced, is a kind of fiery dart, striking fresh and fresh, to the wounding of the heart. Whoever they are that are under the curse of the Law, by reason of sin, there is no voice speaks, or can be heard, by them, for the loudness of that voice, Cursed, cursed, cursed, every moment, every hour; nothing in the world but cursed.

Beloved, let me tell you, this concerns not only persons that live in all manner of licentiousness, as drunkenness, whoredom, the profanation of the Sabbath in the grossest measure; but, that I may speak plainly, this extends in a parallel line with them to the exactest, strictest, precisest person in their conversation, though the world is not able to say {as men use to say} to them, black is thine eye; nay, though thou seem to be spiritual in all thy performances; nay, and largely too, yet if thou be under the Law, in thy transgression, thou shalt hear from it, as many curses pronounced against thee, as all the profane wretches under heaven; the greatness of thy honesty and uprightness, whether in religion, or in matters of commerce and dealings with men, thy honest conversation, I say, hath the loud clangs of curses sounding in thy ears. Suppose thou art a man diligently attending the gates of the house of God, given much to prayer, fasting, mourning and weeping; yea, to great liberality, thou givest all thy goods to the poor, &c.; yet, I say, for all this thou mayest be under the curse of the Law that will pick a quarrel in the best of these performances; it will say, thus and thus, in this and that thou hast "not continued

in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do then;" concerning this, thou art under the curse of it as well as another.

Secondly, there are not only menacings and threatenings as fearful knell in thine ears from the Law, while thou art in bondage under it; but also there is no more with it than a word and a blow. The Lord doth not deal with men in this case, as he deals with his own people, holding his rod before them to give them warning for an escape; but presently upon the transgression, the threatening is put in execution speedily without mercy, laying on the back of the transgressor, terrifying and racking the soul! Oh, the soul that is awakened, that hears the menaces and feels the scourges of the Law! Oh, what torments and anguish, what tribulation and bitterness must continually affright it! This, I say, is the commission of the Law, to spare neither high nor low, rich or poor. Nay, I will go further, holy or unholy, in respect of the practice of holiness, can exempt himself from the curse of the Law. It is true, as the Apostle saith, the Law speaks life; "Do this and live;" but poor comfort is it, because it first requires such doings as are impossible to be attained; just as if a man should be condemned to die at the bar, with this promise; take all England, and remove it upon thy shoulders into the West Indies, and then thou shalt be saved from this death.[49] The judge had as good say nothing, for the thing is impossible to be done. The Law indeed, says, "Do this and live;" but where is the man that can do it, by continuing in all things without failing in one tittle thereof? He that continueth in the whole Law, and fails but in one point, is guilty of all; therefore, till you come to that perfection of fulfilling it, that you fail not in one tittle, never dream of the life that it holds out to you. If you have failed in one point, all you

49 Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his Vindiciae Legis, pg. 14, represents this passage as a decrying of the Law; but what decrying of the Law is this, to observe the true nature and language of it, requiring that which it is impossible for fallen man to do; he himself instances in the Gospel, by way of reply, bidding a man believe a thing impossible to man's power, he observes; and is not this as much a decrying of the Gospel? Indeed, there is this difference, the Gospel not only encourages to believe, but it is often accompanied with the power of God, enabling men to believe, whereas the Law is never attended with such power as to enable men to fulfill it; but this, he says, is extraneous to the matter in hand; but wherein it is so, is not said. See Lancaster's Vindication of the Gospel. Gill.

have done is raveled out unto the end again; all your labour is lost; you are as much under the curse as if you had done nothing at all. {Rom.3:19}

Yet further, beloved, the bondage under the Law not only stands in the cursings of it, and in the presence of all evil thereby, but also in the privation of all comfort, that men might have under this torment; I say, a privation of all comfort; for there is not a word, not a tittle of comfort for the refreshment of a person under the Law, not a tittle of comfort in all the Law, from first to last. It is true, there was comfort intermingled in the promulgation of it, but the comfort is not from that properly so considered. As it contains in it a curse to the disobedient, so there is no comfort to any man that is under it, in respect of the curse it; I say, the Law is to such persons {as Micaiah was to Ahab} never speaking a word of good to them. But this is not all, for though the Law be never so rigid of itself, if it would allow and suffer others to speak a word of comfort, there were some good thing in it; but it keeps under, and shuts up, that there cannot be a word of comfort heard from any other. "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." {Gal.3:23} There you shall find that the Law is not only a terror of itself to those that are under it, but it is a most rigid, severe keeper, that there cannot come in the least glimmerings of light, and comfort elsewhere; for {saith the Apostle there, of persons being under the Law} they are shut up unto, or until the faith; for he calls the Law a school-master until Christ; so that Christ himself hath not a word of comfort for them while they are under the Law; when Christ speaks anything, presently saith the Law, this is not to you; this is for others that are exempted from my government, from my dominion; there is nothing of all this for you, you have nothing to do with it.[50] I say, this is the condition

50 Mr. Burgess, in his Vindiciae Legis, pg. 14, cavils at this passage. He observes that by the Law, in Gal.3:23, is meant the scripture in general; which, if so, is true of the Law in particular; though not the whole scripture, but the Law part of it must certainly be intended, since part of the scripture, at least, is written for comfort; he urges, that the Apostle is speaking of the form of Moses's regimen, and of the fathers having no comfort by that means. Be it so; the same holds good of all other persons that are under the same spirit of bondage to the Law; he suggests that the Doctor in

of men that are kept under this bitterness of the Law, that as they transgress, the curse of it is their prison; persons kept in this estate, how do they put off the comforts of Christ from them? There is none of them belongs to me, saith such a soul; I have sinned, and all the judgments of Christ are pronounced against me, I must die. So long as you continue in this estate, the curses of the Law are as frequently pronounced against you, as there are transgressions in you. There will not be one comfort of Jesus Christ to give refreshment to your spirit; but so long as you still remain in this estate, that you will conclude you are under the curse, because of your transgressions, you will forsake all the mercies of the Gospel. This is, then, to be in bondage under the Law; namely, for a man so to have it tyrannize and domineer over him, as to make him believe that as often as he transgresses, he must expect the sentence of the curse of it to be fulfilled upon him.

Thirdly, they that are in bondage under the Law because of sin, as they are subject to this misery in respect of the privation of comfort; so the Law, it is true, asks work enough, more than any man under heaven can now perform; but will provide nothing in the world, wherewith to have things done. It requires the full tale of brick, but it gives no straw; it puts into no way where help may be had; it suffers no help to come in. Let me tell you, you that are under the curse of the Law, that is, have still the Law telling you that as you do fail, so you must have the curse; you shall find that when you do the will of God, it will exact the whole, the utmost tale of brick of you, and will give no help at all, though never so weak and unable. Get it as you can, do what you will, when the day is done, the Law requires that there be not a brick short. If you fail the least that can be in it, it is no matter, able or not able, you must have the lash, as well as those that have the greatest abilities in the world. It is a hard condition; I have opened it the

representing the Law as such a rigid keeper, that it will let none speak comfort to a man, excludes a mediator; it is certain that it does not direct to any, and whilst the soul is under the power of it, it will not suffer it to receive any comfort from Christ the Mediator, or from his Gospel, until this breaks in through the power of divine grace upon him, and delivers him from the bondage of the Law. Gill.

more largely, that you may the better see the glory and happiness of that freedom Christ hath purchased for his people.

I will in a word give you a touch, who the persons are that are in this bondage; and then I will come to set forth the freedom itself; and, I hope it will not be tedious to hear of the freedom, when you have heard of the extreme bitterness of this bondage. Who are under this bondage? I answer, as I said before, whoever you are, that will apply still to yourselves the sentence and curse of the Law, because of transgression; you that be still arguing and pleading, if I transgress, it is but justice, and I must expect to feel the smart of the rod. I say, you that will still maintain and establish the curse, as a necessary attendant upon transgression and disobedience, and take this to be your condition and your portion; you are the men that are under the Law, that are under the curse of it. I know, although you may think to wind yourselves out of the extremity of the curse, or from the rod of the Law, by your strictness and exactness, and grow up to perfection in your obedience; yet all your perfection of obedience shall not be able to except you from the lash, till you have attained to such, that hath not one jot or tittle of failing or deviation at all; for if you fail in one tittle, you are gone forever; for the Law, as it attends great faults, so it attends little failings too; and, if you give it power over you, when you commit great sins, it will take power to itself, to whip, to curse you for small sins too.

I will come to discover what the freedom is, from the bondage Christ speaks of here; I say, this freedom is from all this bondage under sin and the Law. First, Christ exempts men and discharges them, and acquits them from all the menaces, and threatenings, and all the bitter language that the Law pronounces against the transgressors of it. Mark well what I say, for every person made free by Christ, is freed and exempted, that the Law cannot, must not pronounce one curse against him; there is not one of all the curses in it, that belongs to such a man that is made free by Christ. This seems strange, that the Law should not dare to pronounce the curse, where sin is committed; but not so strange as true; the free-men of Christ, when they transgress the Law, as

in all things they sin, yet when they sin, there is no curse, no menaces, no threatenings of the Law to be executed upon them. Should I come to instance, peradventure I should give offence to some; I would not willingly give offence to any; but the truth, as it is in Jesus, must not be concealed for fear of the anger of those that are enemies unto Christ. Let me therefore tell you, suppose a member of Christ, a free-man of his should happen to fall, not only by a failing or a slip, but also by a gross failing, a heavy failing; nay, a scandalous falling into sin.[51] Christ making a person free, disannuls, frustrates and makes void every curse and sentence that is in the Law, that is against such a transgressor; {Gal.3:13;} that this member of Christ is no more under the curse when he hath transgressed, than he was before he transgressed.[52] Thus I say, Christ has conveyed him beyond the reach of the curse; it concerns him no more than if he had not transgressed. For the illustration of this I beseech you to consider one thing, it is familiar to you, and the case is the same with Christ's free-men; suppose there are two men, equally guilty of felony and murder, both of them come to their arraignment; one of them hath his discharge or pardon from the king, having received satisfaction in his behalf; the other hath received no discharge at all. The judge goes on to pronounce the sentence according to the Law; thou shalt go from hence to the place from whence thou camest, and from thence to the place of execution there to be hanged; now mark, these are two men equal in transgression; and therefore in themselves equally deserving the same sentence of execution; when the judge pronounces the justice of the Law upon the one transgressor, he hath not his discharge, he lies under the sentence; but the other hath his discharge, and therefore the judge speaks

51 Through ignorance, weakness of the flesh, and the power of Satan's temptations. Gill.

52 Sin often separates between God and his own people with respect to communion, but never with respect to union to him or interest in him; for he knew what they would be when he set his love upon them; his love broke through all the corruptions of nature and sins of life in their conversion; and appears to continue the same from the strong expressions of his grace to them, notwithstanding all their backslidings. Now this does not suppose that God loves sin, nor does it give any encouragement to it; for though it cannot separate from interest in God, yet it often does from the enjoyment of him. Gill.

not a word of this sentence to him; {Jn.8:36, Rom.8:1 & 10:4;} I say again, the judge dares not speak a word of this sort to him; and when the man that is pardoned hears the sentence, he may hear it as the doom of his fellow; but he hears nothing of it concerning himself; so it is with the free-man of Christ, he may fall into the same sin that a reprobate falls into, {as Noah was once drunk, David did once commit adultery and murder,} but as this man is the free-man of Christ, the curse cannot attack him; though the Law say to the reprobate, that hath not freedom by Christ, thou shalt certainly be damned for this; yet the Law cannot say one word of this to him that is a free-man, though he commit the same fault, and be guilty of the same punishment; and the ground of all this is, that Christ hath made him free from it. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." {Rom.8:2}

Therefore, let me tell you in a word; if you be free-men of Christ, you may esteem all the curses of the Law, as no more concerning you than the laws of England concern Spain, or the laws of Turkey an Englishman, with whom they have nothing to do.[53] I do not say that the Law is absolutely abolished, but it is abolished in respect of the curse of it, to every person that is a free-man of Christ; so though such a man sin, the Law hath no more to say to him than if he had not sinned. Beloved, Christ is a Sanctuary, he is a privileged place to every one of his free-men; the Law is not able to serve, or rather it is disabled from serving an arrest warrant upon the person that is walking in Christ, and keeps himself within those bounds. He that continues in Christ's word is his disciple indeed, and the truth shall make him free. {Jn.8:30,31} If you abide in Christ, and keep in Christ, no sergeant

53 This passage is most grossly misrepresented by Mr. Burgess, in his Vindiciae Legis, pg.13, who quotes it thus, "a man under grace hath no more to do with the Law than an Englishman hath with the laws of Spain or Turkey;" whereas the Doctor's words and sense are, that Christ's free-men should esteem the curses of the Law, not the Law itself, as no more concerning them than the laws of England concern Spain, or those of Turkey an Englishman; and to prevent any mistake, lest it should be thought that they have nothing to do with the Law in any sense, being freed from the curses of it, he adds the words that follow, which most clearly show that he meant not an abolition of the Law in all respects, but in respect of the curse of it, and that to Christ's free-men only. Gill.

of the Law dares come in to serve a writ; no accusation of the Law can come in against you. Look what the Apostle triumphing saith; "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." {Rom.8:33,34} Mark well I pray you, Paul doth not say, that the elect never transgress; he confesses that there is transgression; but that which he triumphs in is, that though they transgress, there is nothing to be laid to their charge; no curse can come against them, nor be executed upon them; there is no tossing them in jail for their transgression.

Secondly, the free-man of Christ, as he is exempted from the curse and rod of the Law, that is become a muzzle-bound dog, he may pass and repass without the least snap, without the least bite of it; yea, though he fall, yet it cannot come at him to hurt him. {Mic.7:8} So, in the second place, the free-man of Christ is let loose to enjoy the free Spirit, as David calls it, {in Psalm 51,} or the comforting Spirit, as Christ calls it, {in John 14:26.} I say, this freedom consists in this, to have free society, and free discourse with the free Spirit of God, so that the free-man of Christ may hear all the gracious language provided in the rich thoughts of God for him; he may hear, and that with application to himself, that his iniquities are blotted out as a cloud; that God will remember his sins no more; that they are cast into the bottom of the sea; they are laid all upon Christ; that the Lamb of God took them all away; that the blood of Christ cleanseth him from all sins. It is a marvelous freedom indeed, to have this participation of communion with this free

Spirit of Christ, to hear such comfortable language to raise up a drooping spirit, to satisfy a languishing soul.

Thirdly, the free-man of Christ hath this freedom that Christ doth all his work for him, as well as in him. He that is in bondage under the Law, as I told you before, must do everything himself, and that he doth, he must do perfectly; that is an insupportable thing, and heavy bondage for a man to have more laid upon him than his strength is able to bear. The free-man of Christ,

considering that he is weak, poor, and unable to work, Christ doth all his work for him. In Isaiah 26:12, the Holy Ghost tells us that the Lord himself hath "wrought all our works in us;" and in the margin the words are rendered, "he hath done all our works for us." But, look in Romans 5:19, and you will plainly see this freedom of the free-men of Christ, that they stand righteous in the sight of God, by that which he hath done for them. Christ hath so wrought for them, that they are as righteous, as if they had done all in their own persons. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Look here, and you shall see that Christ doth all the work for his free-men, that they should do for themselves; as if a man were commanded to bring in a thousand bricks by such a day, or else to have the strapado; another man brings in all his bricks for him, while he doth not one for himself. What the other man doth for him is accepted as a full tale, even for this man, though he doth nothing himself. Even so it is with the free-men of Christ, he doth all for them that God requires of them to be done; and the righteousness of Christ stands in that manner theirs, as if they had done it themselves. "For by the obedience of one many are made righteous," not by obedience in their own person, but by the obedience of one man, Christ; even by the obedience of him alone, we stand thus righteous before God.

But some will say, by this it seems we take away all endeavors and employment from believers, the free-men of Christ. Doth Christ do everything for them? Do they stand righteous before God in respect of what he hath done for them? Then they may sit still; they may do what they list.

I answer, will you deny this, that we are righteous with and that we are righteous with God by the Righteousness of Christ alone? Or is it by our own righteousness? Then mark what the Apostle saith, "for they" {saith he, speaking of the Jews,} "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." {Rom.10:3,4} Either

you must disclaim Christ's righteousness or you must disclaim your own; for, if the gift of God be of grace, then it is not of works, else work is no more work; and, if it be of works, it is no more of grace, otherwise grace is no more grace. {Rom.11:6}

But you will say further to me; {for, except a man be a mere Papist, I am sure he cannot deny but that the righteousness by which I stand righteous before God is the righteousness Christ doth for me, and not that I do for myself;} you will ask me, I say, doth not this take off all manner of obedience and all manner of holiness? I answer, and thus much I say, it takes them off from those ends which they aim at in their obedience; namely, the end which Christ's obedience served; as much as to say that our standing righteousness, by what Christ hath done for us, concerns us in point of justification, consolation and salvation. We have justification, our peace, our salvation, only by the righteousness that Christ hath done for us; but this doth not take away our obedience, nor our services in respect of those ends for which such are now required of believers. We have yet several ends for duties and obedience, namely, that they may glorify God and evidence our thankfulness, that they may be profitable to men, that they may be ordinances wherein to meet with God, to make good what he hath promised. So far we are called out to services and walking uprightly, sincerely, exactly, and strictly, according to the good pleasure of God; and, in regard of such ends, there is a gracious freedom that the free-men of Christ have by him; that is, so far forth as services and obedience is expected at the free-man's hand, for the ends that I have named, there is Christ, by his Spirit, present with those that are free-men, to help them in all such kind of services, so that "they become strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," to do the will of God. Mark what the Apostle speaks; "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." {Phil.4:13} Of myself {saith he} I am able to do nothing; but with Christ, and through him that strengthens me, I am able to do all things. He that is Christ's free-man hath always the strength of Christ present, answerable to that weight and burden of employment God calls him forth unto. "My grace

{saith Christ} is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." {II Cor.12:9} As you are free-men of Christ, you may confidently rest upon it, that he "will never fail you, nor forsake you," for when he calls you forth into employments.

But you that are under the Law, there is much required of you, and imposed upon you, but no help to be expected. You must do all by your own strength; the whole tale of brick shall be exacted of you, but no straw shall be given you. But you, that are free-men of Christ, he will help you; he will oil your wheels, fill your sails, and carry you upon eagles wings, that you shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint. {Is.40:31} So then, the free-men of Christ, having him and his Spirit for their life and strength, may go infinitely beyond the exactest legalist in the world in more cheerful obedience than they can perform. He that walks in his own strength can never steer his business so well and so quickly, as he that hath the arms, the strength, and the principles of the great God of Heaven and Earth; as he that hath this great Supporter, this wise Director, this mighty Assister, to be continually by him. There is no burden, you shall bear, but, by this freedom you have him to put his own shoulder to it to bear it up.

It is wonderful to consider that Christ should groan under the burden that was laid upon him by his Father, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And yet Paul and Silas should sing for joy, when their bodies were covered with gore blood by reason of stripes. How comes this to pass, was Paul stronger than Christ? If not, why was he so joyful, and Christ so sad? God withdrew himself from Christ, and therefore, he saith, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the strength of Christ was present with Paul, that this very imprisonment was a palace and recreation to him; as Christ bare all the burdens for him. Oh; were you but the free-men of Christ, and did you but know it, every affliction would be but a flea-biting; for he would bear all your duties and burdens for you; he would stand under the greatest weight that can be laid upon you, and bear it off your backs; the greatest burden should never

make you stoop, because there is a sufficient strength to bear it up. There may be a heavy burden laid upon the back of a child, and yet it may with ease go under it; because there is a greater strength that bears it up, it doth not lie upon the child. So long as Christ bears up your weight it shall be easy to you. You know there is a ceremony used among us for men to carry the corpse of their friends to the grave; for fashion's sake they go under the corpse; but there are bearers appointed that bear all the weight upon their shoulders; so Christ bears all for his free-men; and this is the freedom men have by him, that if they are to bear any burdens, he comes and bears all for them; and they go as easily under them, as if they had none upon them at all.

You shall find the free-men of Christ that they have also the constant attendance of the free Spirit of Christ waiting upon them. When Christ hath made any man free, he sends his Spirit from heaven, first to acquaint the soul with all that he hath done for him; and not to bring good news and be gone again; but, after the good news is brought; he waits and attends upon this free-man in all his journeys and travels to those mansions that Christ hath prepared for him; that so in the way, if he should faint, he would refresh him with the water of life to fetch it again; and, in case it grows weak and fails, the Spirit attends to administer cordials, to revive, and to renew the strength of this man again that thus fails; and, in case it grow weary, the Spirit is sent to take it up into his arms, into his bosom; in case the way is tedious, the Spirit is sent to take off the tediousness of the way with sweet discourse, telling him what things are laid up in fulness of pleasures and glory, telling him what welcome there will be at his coming home; when there are many byways in his way, that there may be no going out of the way, he will direct him, and lead him by the hand, and never leave him, till he hath delivered him up into the hands of Christ, and carried him unto mansions in glory. "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." {Ps.48:14} "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." {Ps.73:24}

Lastly, in a word, to speak of who these free-men of Christ

are. No man knows them, but only those that Christ takes out of bondage. Time will not give me leave to be large here; would you have any means how you may come to be the free-men of Christ? Know this, that there is no consideration in the business of Christ, for the making of men free, but only their bondage in which they are. The sum is this, beloved; in brief, Christ doth not look that you should come forth and meet him, to mediate, or intercede, or beg, or bring a price in your hands, that you may be his free-men; but he looks upon persons as they are bound up, as helpless, as unable to will or do anything; and, for his own compassion's sake, he takes up these, when they little dream, or think they ever shall be set at liberty.

But, you will say that all shall not be freed that are in bondage; how shall I then know, that I am one of the number of Christ's free-men? I answer, "he that believeth shall be saved;" for if the Lord give but to thy spirit, now truly to believe, thou art the very man for whom Christ was sent to proclaim liberty; I say, if thou canst believe and roll thyself upon him, cleave to him, and say, "I will not let thee go;" this is security enough; Christ was sent to deliver thee; "he that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast him out." I beseech you to consider; {the Lord God, in the abundant riches of his grace, give closing spirits to some of you at this time;} you that think there must be a great deal of pains by your endeavors, and on your parts, to have this freedom; but Christ doth not look for your pains; he came to save those that could not tell which way to turn themselves. And if the Scripture be true, {as most certainly it is,} if thou believest that Christ is thine, if thou believe with all thy heart, thy sins are forgiven thee; {though the very believing itself doth not entitle you in this freedom;} but, if you would know, whether you have any part in this freedom or not, believing in the Lord Christ is a sufficient manifestation. Do but catch hold of him, to have thy deliverance by him, he must forsake himself, and deny his truth, if he cast or throw thee off.

IX Men's Own Righteousness Their Grand Idol

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." {Rom.10:3}

Provident and well-wishing pilots, observing the rocks on which many ignorant and heedless passengers have split and sunk, and where they themselves have escaped but narrowly, use to set up seamarks as cautions or warnings to such as shall come after, that by other men's harms they may learn to be wary. It is the Apostle's very practice in this place; in the former part of this epistle; and especially in chapter 9, where he mightily contends for the free grace of God unto peace, life, and salvation, without works. "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works," but of grace; as it was said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" therefore, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" I say, this is the main doctrine that he preaches from the beginning of the Epistle to the closure of chap 9.

Then he comes upon the Jews with an argument to their reproach, for he says that "the Gentiles that followed not after righteousness have attained unto righteousness," when they themselves that did follow after righteousness could not attain it; and he gives the reason why they that pressed so hard after it could not attain it; "because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the Law." {Rom.9:32} Why, what hurt was there in that, will some say? The Apostle answereth, that hereby "they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence;" they would have their righteousness set up to do them good, and this they sought as it were by the works of the Law.

But some men might think that the Apostle had a bitterness of spirit, or some malice against his own brethren, and that this was but the fruit of it; therefore in the beginning of this chapter, he clears himself from any such base ends in his ministry; for his

part he wishes with all his heart, it may be well with them. "My heart's desire, and prayer for Israel is, that they may be saved;" nay, so far as he may speak well of them, and the most he can say, he will; and he will not conceal anything; in verse 2, he confesses, nay he bears witness to it, that "they had a zeal of God;" but yet he must not dissemble, he must deal friendly, though ever so plainly; though they had a zeal of God, "yet it was not according to knowledge."

And because he had taxed them with ignorance, here in the text; he discovers what this ignorance of theirs was; and what the fearful and desperate fruits of it were; that whereof they were ignorant was God's righteousness, "being ignorant of the righteousness of God;" the fruit of it is twofold, both very bitter, the one immediately issuing from the other.

First, this ignorance of God's righteousness put them upon a fearful mistake; for they go about, {upon this,} to "establish their own righteousness."

Secondly, and that mistake put them upon another as bad as that, if not worse; therefore they submitted not to the righteousness of God.

The proposition the words afford us is briefly this, {for we will sum up the whole verse into one head} namely that ignorance of God's righteousness puts men upon these two dangerous mischiefs, an establishing of their own righteousness, and a not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.

Men will establish their own righteousness; they will not submit to the righteousness of God, while they are ignorant of it. Beloved, they were not so easily misled, as we are apt to follow them, having gone before us; we are like sheep leaping without looking, if any leap before us; it hath been the rock of offence, a stumbling-stone from the beginning to this day, and will be to the end of the world; there will be an establishing of our own righteousness, without submitting to the righteousness of God, while there is an ignorance of this righteousness.

Now, that we may take warning, and so escape the danger that they have felt the smart of already, it will be requisite we take

into consideration.

First, what this righteousness of theirs and ours is, that they did, and we are apt to go about to establish. Secondly, what it is to go about to establish this our righteousness. Thirdly, what this righteousness of God is that they did not submit unto. Fourthly, what it is not to submit unto this righteousness of God. Fifthly, what this ignorance is, from whence both these fearful evils issue, the establishing of our own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God. And lastly, what the issue in the end will prove of these or as many of these as the time will permit in their order.

To begin with the first, what is that righteousness of theirs and ours that the Apostle complains of, that being established, is a rock of offence? I am not ignorant, that the eyes of some persons are only, or most, upon a righteousness of man's own devising and contriving; such a righteousness as never came into God's thoughts; a righteousness according to the precepts and traditions of men; such a righteousness as our Saviour, {in Matt.15:9,} taxeth the Pharisees withal, who "taught for doctrines the traditions of men;" and by their own traditions, as much as in them lay, made void the commandments of God. This kind of righteousness in our time proceeds from the presumption of men, that dare put anything of their own, without warrant and commission from God, into the worship and service of God; charging things upon men as duties of religion, that God binds not men unto; for my own part, I am clear of the mind, that this kind of righteousness is far from the righteousness of God, the Apostle here speaks of; and that it is the highest presumption that a man can possibly take upon himself, to set himself so in the place of God, as not only, not to command from him, but also to command without and against him. Law-givers hold themselves then most disparaged and contemned when any inferior will take upon him to make laws without them, or against them. It will lie heavy when it shall once come to an account, not only upon the actors, but also upon those that may be the redressers, if this kind of righteousness established by some be not brought down, and

laid in the dust.

But, under favour, I conceive that the Apostle aims at a more sublime righteousness, than the righteousness in the precepts of men; he speaks of such a righteousness, which some it may be are too forward to establish, who yet abhor to establish the other, we have now spoken of; the righteousness the Apostle complains of being established, is not the righteousness of man's making, but of God's own making, a righteousness according to his own will; I mean a righteousness consisting in obedience to the things that God himself hath commanded unto men; a righteousness which is a walking in all the commandments of God, though it be in a way of blamelessness; this very righteousness, I say, is that, which being established, proves a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence to all that shall establish it.

This may seem harsh, beloved, at first, but I shall make it clear to you from the Apostle's own interpretation of himself, who best knew his own mind; that this is the righteousness he here speaks of, mark but the words immediately following the text, {chap.10:4,} "for, {saith he,} Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." To what purpose doth he bring this passage, that Christ is the end of the Law; but that by these words he might confute their vanity who think to establish their own righteousness in the fulfilling of the Law? As if he should say, you think by your keeping the Law, by your righteousness that you perform, you can attain to the end of it, that so you may obtain the grace and goodness of the Lord; but it is in vain, it is not you that can reach the end of the Law; neither doth God aim at it that you should reach it, but he hath constituted and ordained Christ to be the end of it. Therefore the righteousness of God must be the righteousness of Christ; the righteousness that God aims at is perfect, a righteousness that reaches to the very end of the Law; your righteousness can never reach to the end of it; it is Christ's alone that doth it.

And yet again, in verse 5, the Apostle clears more fully what he means by our righteousness, for there he begins to make the distinction between our righteousness and the righteousness

of God, explaining what they both are; "for Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law," {that which he calls our own righteousness, in verse 4, from Moses, he calls the righteousness of the Law in verse 5;} Moses, {saith he,} describing the righteousness of the Law, saith thus, "that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." And if you will look into Leviticus 18:5, you shall there see what the righteousness of the Law is, which the Apostle speaks of in this place; and if you observe but the margin of your Bible, you shall find this very text, in verse 5, is wisely referred to that of Leviticus, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them; I am the LORD." See, the Apostle makes use of the very phrase, "he that doth them shall live through them, and in them." It is the righteousness of the Law, saith he; it is the keeping of God's statutes, and doing of God's judgments, saith Moses. By this, you may see what righteousness it is, that the Lord by the Apostle speaks of; a righteousness that consists in doing the statutes and judgments of the Lord.

And if you will but consider in Luke 18:11,12, the condition of the Pharisee that Christ speaks of, who went up into the temple to pray as the Publican did; in him you shall see, I say, and easily perceive, what the righteousness was, that they went about to establish; for there the Pharisee justifies himself in respect of many particular branches of the Law; "I thank thee, {saith he,} that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Mark it well, I pray, see what it is that he pleads for, as that which must prevail with God for good to him; it is his own righteousness; and what is that? It is a righteousness according to the Law; it is a righteousness of piety, of justice; "I fast twice in the week, I am no extortioner, nor unjust person, nor adulterer, &c." Now hear Christ's answer concerning this Pharisee; and you shall see what he thinks of this righteousness he speaks of; "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;" the publican went away rather justified than the Pharisee, and the reason is, because he did go in the strength

of this righteousness of his, to speed with God; his expectation was from this; it was not a righteousness of his own devising and contriving; but a righteousness according to God's Law.

If you look further into Philippians chapter 3, you shall find, the Apostle speaks fully to the case in hand, instancing in himself in verses 5-9, where he gives an account of his estate, in which he was before the time of his conversion. First, he saith, he had a zeal for God, and that put him on so hot, that he persecuted the church of God, merely out of ignorance; for, saith he of himself, "I did it ignorantly;" and "concerning the righteousness of the Law {saith he} I was blameless." Mark that passage well; as all this was before conversion; afterwards he tells us, this was in the time of his ignorance, wherein he made full account that this righteousness of his was his gain; but, saith he, "what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law." By all these passages, I say, put together, wherein the Apostle so fully expounds himself, it plainly appears, that the righteousness of the Law, the establishing whereof; he here taxeth, as a dangerous mistake, and a fruit of ignorance, is that, wherein men walk according to God's own Law blamelessly.

I am not ignorant, beloved, how this assertion goeth under the foul blur of Antinomianism, that blameless walking according to the Law, being established, is a fruit of ignorance, and a cause of men's not "submitting to the righteousness of God." And no marvel it goes for such now; for, in the Apostle's time it was accounted so; nay, it was objected against the Apostle himself as direct Antinomianism; and, therefore, he was enforced to vindicate himself thus, "do we make void the Law, {saith he} through faith? God forbid!" {Rom.3:31} He takes away the objection they put to him, upon his establishing of God's righteousness, and his overthrowing our righteousness. It was objected, that hereby he went about to make void the Law; and, therefore, it is no marvel it

holds still as an objection, that the maintaining of this principle is the overthrowing of the Law. But, beloved, I must say to you, as the Apostle did in the same case, "God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law;" that is to say; in its right place. It takes men off from performing duties to corrupt ends, and from the bad use they are apt to make of them; namely, idolizing their own righteousness. And, therefore, he doth not condemn the use of the Law, and our righteousness, simply; that which he speaks against here is the establishing of our righteousness. Our own righteousness is good in its kind, and for its own proper uses; but then it proves a fruit of sin, ignorance, and a dangerous stumbling-block, and an idol, when we go about to establish it.

I come, therefore, to the second thing, which is to clear this truth more fully, namely, what it is to establish this righteousness; or what establishing the Apostle drives at in this place? For the clearing of which, the antithesis, or the opposition, that he sets, will give you a great deal of light to understand his meaning and purpose here, by "going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God." He speaks here, therefore, of such an establishing of our righteousness, according to the Law, as to bring it into the room, and stead, or place of God's righteousness. It is such an establishing of it, as that for it we cannot, nor will not admit, that the righteousness of God should do its office. So far forth, then, as any righteousness of ours encroaches upon the privileges and prerogatives of the righteousness of God, so that that cannot do its own work, or at least must be circumscribed in doing it, by this, so far is there an establishing of our own righteousness, which is a fruit of ignorance, and is a stumbling-block, and a rock of offence.

It will be worth the while, therefore, to consider, when our righteousness is said truly to be established in the room and stead of the righteousness of God. This will be cleared by the consideration of the main scope and drift of men, in the performing of the righteousness which they establish. When men put that upon their own righteousness, which should have been put upon God's only; when men make that the sanctuary

and refuge that God's righteousness only should be, then is it set up as a grand idol, and established in the room and place of God's righteousness. To clear the case to you, by some particular instances; it is a thing of great importance, as at all times, so now at this time of eminent danger, the sword being over our heads, and over the whole nation {the Lord having revealed to the spirits of men, by his truth, that in case of eminent danger, there should be a great deal of zeal to God;} that the people of God should be put mightily on, to deal with God in this present extremity and necessity; but, I am afraid, many have a zeal of God, in this very case, but yet, not according to knowledge; for that too many {ignorantly and zealously, I confess, yet, I say, too many,} in this zeal to God, for their own safety and security, too much establish their own righteousness; and, I fear, if there be a miscarriage after so many fasting-days, and so much praying and seeking God, that the fruits will be the establishing of our own righteousness in the room and place of the righteousness of God. As, for example, when sin abounds, whether personally or generally, what is the way to get off, or get out of such transgression? Appeal to your own spirits, you that are spiritual; is not this your end that you propound? To fast, and pray, and mourn it out; this that which must bring you a discharge of your sins; this is that which must bring you tidings that God will be pacified towards you, that God will turn away his anger from you; if you do but fast spiritually, mourn bitterly, pray zealously with strength of spirit, this is that that shall overcome God.

I ask, or I beseech you rather to ask your own spirits {I mean still, you that are spiritual,} do not your hearts run out continually this way? Do they, or do they not? What then mean all the complaints of yours upon the defects of your fasting, your humiliation, self-denial, and the subduing of your corruptions? That this is that which pulls down the wrath of God upon us; is not this common among us, as long as men do not mend, there is no hope that God will? And, if every man would mend one, this is the way to redress the evil of the times? Beloved, let me deal plainly and freely with you; they that put deliverance from sin and wrath,

upon the spiritual performances of that righteousness, which the Law commands them, they put that righteousness in the room and place of the righteousness of God; they make it as great an idol as can be; for they make it to be that which God's righteousness only is. I speak not against the doing of any righteousness according to the will of God revealed. Let that mouth be forever stopped, that shall be opened to blame the Law that is holy, just, and good; or shall be the means to discourse people from walking in the commandments of God blameless.[54]

All that I speak is this, that it will prove a rock of offence in the end, if it be not turned from; namely, that we should expect that our own righteousness should bring down a gracious answer from God to our spirits; that when we have done our work, in effect, that must prove our mediator and messenger from God; and, as that will speak, so will we have peace, or remain in bitterness of spirit. What can the righteousness of God himself do more than this, to have power with God, to prevail over God for good to us?

Beloved, although some peradventure, may magnify performances done in a spiritual way with attributes and titles even of God's own peculiar; I mean with attributes of omnipotency and invincibleness; certainly there is no omnipotency but God himself, and the righteousness that is God's own; the best righteousness that ever any man could act, or perform in all his life, is not able to divert the least effect of sins, or wrath, or procure or obtain the least smile of favour from God. You know, that "God is a God of purer eyes, and cannot behold iniquity;" you know, that iniquity is that which separates between God and a people; now what is the perfectest righteousness which the best man upon earth performs? Is it not full of unrighteousness and iniquity? "All our righteousness {saith the prophet Isaiah} are but as filthy rags;" and, saith the Apostle, "I account all as dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness." Is there dung and filth in the best of man's righteousness; and can this righteousness have power with God, and prevail over him?

Look upon Christ himself, when he did bear the sins of

54 Is this Antinomianism? Or, can such a preacher be called an Antinomian? Gill.

many upon his own person; he himself was deserted and forsaken of God, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Is Christ forsaken, when the sins of men are upon him, and shall men's persons be accepted and received in respect of such an act of theirs that carries sinfulness in the face of it? Nay, that carries a universal leprosy in the nature of it? Suppose your righteousness were a fulfilling of the whole Law of God, if you fail but in one point, that very failing in one point, makes you guilty of the breach of all the rest; and, when men stand guilty before God, shall they plead that which is full of guilt, to procure favour, mercy, or grace from him? No, no, the sacrifice of God, which is accepted of him, must be a male lamb, and a lamb without blemish; till, therefore, you can purge your righteousness, and separate all iniquity from it, know that all your righteousness in its own nature doth but separate you from God; so far is it from prevailing with him.

Surely, will some say, the righteousness that is performed according to the will of God, pleases him, and moves and melts him, and prevails with him to do this and that good to his people. I answer, too many people in the world too much stint the will of God, so much spoken of when they speak of a righteousness according to it, or a righteousness to do it; what is it? It is true indeed, righteousness done according to the will of God infinitely prevails with God; but show me the man that can perform it, a mere man without Christ? Show me a man that ever did, or ever can do this, acting righteousness according to the will of God? "Of myself," saith Paul, "I can do nothing;" "without me," saith Christ, "ye can do nothing;" nay, the Apostle goes further, "how to perform that which is good, I find not;" whilst men conceive that the will of God consists only in the materials of

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righteousness; peradventure they may think theirs is according to it; but alas the materials of righteousness are but the least part of the will of God wherewith he is pleased. Now to do an act partly with the will of God and partly against it, is this to do an act according to it? To do something that God calls

for at your hands in some things and to walk directly contrary to him in others; is this to do his will? Suppose for the matter, the righteousness you do, be according to the will of God, that you do the thing that he calls for of you; as for instance, you fast, and pray, and the like; do you do these things according to the will of God, because the outward act is done? The will of God extends to the manner of doing, to the disposition of the person that is to do, as well as to the matter; as in Isaiah chapter 1, were not new moons, sabbaths and solemn assembles God's own ordinances? And was not the performance of them materially according to the will of God? Yet, nevertheless, God loathed this service of righteousness; he was weary of it, he could not bear it; there was sinfulness mixed with it. "Your hands are full of blood," saith the Lord; therefore, tough the things were materially according to his will, yet his soul abhorred them, being done amiss. "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." {Is.1:12-14}

Suppose men go further than simply doing things according to the will of God materially; they do not only the things, but do them spiritually with enlargedness of heart and affection; you fast, and you fast with bitterness of spirit, you eat bitter herbs in fasting; you mourn, and you mourn bitterly for your transgressions; you pray, and pray zealously in the heat and fervor of your spirits; now if all this be not done in faith, it is abominable; for "without faith, it is impossible to please God; he that comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him;" he that hath performed a duty, and expects from that performance, an answer according to his mind, he doth not do it in faith; for "we must do all we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith the Apostle; and "when we have done all, must say, we are unprofitable servants;" and it

must be Christ alone that must prevail with the Father for us; all our righteousness will prevail nothing at all with God, nor move him a jot, except it be to pull down wrath; there is not one act of righteousness that a person doth but when that is finished, there is more transgression belonging to him than before he had performed it; and there is no composition, there is no buying out of evil by good doings; the doing of good doth not make a recompense for what sin doth; we pay but our debts in doing good; so that as there is a new righteousness performed, there is still a new reckoning added to the former; by acting of righteousness, you make up a greater number of sins than before; {Rom.14:23;} so that it is only Christ from whom we must have the expectation of success, in whatsoever thing we desire.

In a word, let a man's righteousness be never so exact; yet that is not according to the will of God, which hath not God's ends, which he proposeth in the doing of righteousness; you shall find the general rule of Christ and his apostles, to be this, that what we do, we must not only do it in the name of Christ, but also to the Lord, and for the Lord; "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness;" {Lk.1:74,75;} it is not, let us serve ourselves in holiness and righteousness, but let us serve him. "For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." {I Cor.6:20} He doth not say, being bought with a price, let us now seek our own good, as if we were still our own men; as if we had now liberty to trade for our own selves; you are "not your own," and therefore not your own, because you are "bought with a price;" therefore "glorify God in your bodies and spirits." It is most certainly true, that God having provided through Christ all things appertaining to life and godliness for his people; thereby calls them off from all self-ends, and bye-respects in his services, to have only respect to him in them; he hath done all that may be done for yourselves.

But some may say, peradventure, this is a way to overthrow all righteousness at once; what, all that ever a man doth, though he doth ever so spiritually, though ever so exactly is to no purpose

and in vain? Doth a man get nothing by all the righteousness he performs? Then we had as good sit still, and do nothing at all, will some say. I answer, this is carnal reasoning indeed; look but into the ground of this argument, and it will discover nothing but the selfishness of the person that makes it; I dare be bold to say, that that man will do no righteousness, but simply for his own sake; who, if he should know beforehand, that his righteousness will get him nothing, would therefore sit still, and do nothing; I dare be bold to say, he had as good sit still indeed, and do nothing, for he serves himself, not God, and though he performs righteousness ever so exactly, if he serves himself, God will never reckon that he serves him; when self is eyed, we can never serve God; when our commodity and advantage be not in the thing, we will sit still.

But, beloved, though the righteousness we are to perform be superfluous and vain in respect of any power it hath with God; to move him to do us good, yet it is not altogether superfluous; it is most true, that all the righteousness of man cannot prevail with God to do us good; there is but one mover of God, the man Christ Jesus, who is the only and sole mediator. If you will have your own righteousness to be your mediator with God, to speak to God for you, to prevail with God for you; what is this, but to put it in the room and place of Christ? What is the mediation of Christ else, but for him to come between God and man, and be the daysman to lay his hand upon both, and at once to reconcile them? {Job 9:33} And shall your righteousness be the daysman, and lay hands upon God and man; then farewell Christ and his mediatorship; for this is the peculiar office of Christ, to be man's mediator, and advocate with the Father, to prevail with him for any good for us; so far, therefore as any person looks after his own righteousness, to bring glad tidings from God to him, so far a man establishes it in the room and place of the righteousness of God; which proceeds from the ignorance of that righteousness, and will in the bud prove a stumbling-block to men, and a rock of offence to them.

All this while I desire not to be mistaken; some, it may be, will desire to know then to what use this righteousness of

ours serves, seeing it is not of power to prevail with God. "My goodness extendeth not unto thee," saith David; not to God, but it may to men; "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." {Ps.16:3} Our righteousness is appointed for excellent uses, if we could be contented with those God hath ordained it unto.

First, it serves as a real way to manifest our thankfulness to God, for what we have already received of him. In Psalm 103, David is excellent, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Why, what is the matter David? "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Mark it well, I pray, all that is within us must be praise, and nothing but praise; and the ground is this, God pardons our sins, heals our infirmities, and supplies all our wants; in consideration of this, all that is within us should continually express his praise.

Again secondly, there is this usefulness in it, namely, that we may serve our generation; and the Apostle gives this charge, that "men study to maintain good works," because, saith he, "these things are profitable unto men;" as we may therefore do good to men, so according to our ability, and talent received, we must employ ourselves to the utmost for that end and purpose. The heathens could say, "they were not made for themselves, but for others;" therefore there is this usefulness in our righteousness, that others may receive benefit by it. "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven;" that men may be drawn on to glorify God, we must shine before men in a godly conversation.

Thirdly, it is useful, as it is the ordinance of God, wherein the Lord hath appointed us to meet with him, and wherein he will make good those things which before he hath promised. And this is the very end and ground of our fasting, praying, and mourning in our exigencies and extremities; not that these duties do at all prevail with God, or at all move him; for it is God that moves

even these services and all the spiritualness in us in them; and therefore he moves them in us, because when we are moved by his Spirit, and according to his will come forth to meet him where he appoints, there he will pour out himself in grace and love, according to his promise, not according to our performances. Thus, I say, this great objection may be answered easily, why we fast, and pray, and mourn in adversity, if they do us no good? I say, though they do us no good, yet we fast and pray, in that the Lord saith, come to me, meet me in this and that ordinance, and I will come with my hands full; then, and there, I will pour out that which mine own freeness hath engaged me to do for you; is it not injustice not to meet him then? We confess our sins to him, but what is the ground of forgiveness? Not our confession of sins, not our fasting, prayers, mourning and tears; but "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25}

I will draw towards the conclusion. In a word, whoever he be that is selfish in his own righteousness, and goes about to establish it in the room of Christ, laboring to procure some good unto himself thereby, and makes that righteousness do that for him, that God's righteousness should do, so making an idol of it; first, he plays the most dishonest part with God that can be. Do you profess yourselves to be the servants of God? If you be, what dishonesty is there in you, that you professing to serve him, do notwithstanding, by secret and by stealth, serve yourselves? If an apprentice should hide himself all day long, to earn and gain money for himself, might not his master justly tax him for a dishonest fellow? Why doth the master keep him, and find him, but that all he doth, he should do for him, and not for himself? Are you at God's finding, or are you at your own? Miserable are you that are at your own; are you at God's finding then, and not at your own? What is it you seek for, and would get by the righteousness you seek so eagerly after? The truth is, there is nothing to be gotten that you have not already; if you have Christ, all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. {I Cor.3:23} Are you one of Christ's? A man need not work for that

which is his own already; why then do you work for that which is yours already? Are you in Christ, or are you not? Do you work to get into Christ? Alas; how long might men work out of Christ, and work themselves into hell at last? What can a man get of God by all his righteousness and works, if he hath not Christ to get it for him? Therefore all things are yours, because you are Christ's, or else you shall have nothing at all. God gives nothing of gift, and of his dear love, but as men are in Christ, and for his sake; therefore you do but labour in vain, if you labour for that which is yet to be produced.

But to do good to others; Christ in speaking to Peter saith, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." {Lk.22:32} Let these be the ends of your services; work because good is already made sure to you, and not to make it sure; when a father settles an inheritance upon his son, he makes the deed so, that the son shall not work for the father's means; because the father hath passed over all that he hath to his son, he serves out of love, for what he hath already received, not for what is hoped for.

And as there is dishonesty in self-seeking; so, secondly, there is a foul blur cast upon God. Beloved, if you should see a servant go about the streets complaining thus, Sir, help me to a little work, I must starve except I can work for myself; what would you think of this man's master? Surely, you will say, he is a hard master, that his servant must starve, except he seek for himself, and purvey for himself; you that say in your hearts, you are undone, you must perish, you are lost, except your prayers and humbling of yourselves can get some supply; is not this a working for yourselves? Is not this plain saying, there is no trusting to God, and that we must work for ourselves, or else we shall perish?

I should come to consider the other particulars in this text; but time not permitting we will wind up all in one word of application. We now stand before the Lord, and among other mercies, we expect this great mercy, salvation; not only, salvation in heaven, but salvation from the sword; it is not, it must not be

your good doings that must procure it; or your repentance, that must bring it; you must not rest upon your performances to get it; do all that God calls for when you are in his way; in this respect be doing; but as for your help look up unto the hills from whence it cometh; your help stands in the name of the Lord, that made heaven and earth; and, therefore, in the expectation of help; all your business must lie in this: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." {Ex.14:13}

SERMON X

A ZEAL OF GOD PROVES NOT A MAN A CHILD OF GOD

"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." {Rom.10:2-4}

The Apostle, in the former chapter, more plainly and fully lays down the absolute freeness of the grace of God alone to peace, life, and salvation, than anywhere else; clearly showing, that merely and only for his own good pleasure-sake, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy; especially in that instance of Jacob and Esau, he tells us plainly, that God hath no regard in the world unto good and evil, that might be done by either of them, but before ever they could do any such thing, it is expressly written of them, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated."

And the reason, why God takes nothing into his consideration, either good or evil done by the creature as a motive to his love, the Apostle gives there, is this, "that the purpose of God might stand, according to election; not of works, but of grace;" that is, that all the world may see that the first thoughts of God, in his election, had no eye in the world unto anything that the creature might do, which should have any prevalence with him, to sway him this way, or that way; it was not the consideration of Esau, as one that would be resolute and peremptory in a way of sinfulness, that was

a motive with God to reject him; nor was it the consideration of any propensity in the spirit of Jacob to yield unto calling, or of any inclination in Jacob to glorify him being called; I say, none of these considerations entered into the thoughts of God, when he established his love, even in election itself, upon Jacob; his thoughts were merely upon his own good pleasure within himself; as if he should see a whole heap of creatures together, and, as it were, {if I may so speak,} blindfold of any good the creature could have to move him; he picked out this and that, and the other, without respect of any difference between them.

Then he comes into the closure of chapter 9, to show how desperately his own brethren, after the flesh, the Jews did reject this revealed will and pleasure of God, concerning good to men; they would have something considerable in the creature, as of prevalence to move God to do good to such, rather than such a one; this very conceit, the Apostle calls a stumbling-block, at which they fell.

Now, least he should seem to speak all this out of spite, or prejudice, or through the injuries they had done to him; therefore, that he might not thus be understood, at the beginning of this chapter he confesses, "that his heart's desire, and prayer, was that they might be saved;" he had no ill-will in the world to them; nay, he saith, "that he would be contented to be even cut off for his brethren's sake." And, after he had acquitted himself from sinister respects, he begins to declare the truth as it is in Jesus; and first he comes to tax them, and show where their error lay, and grants it lay not in any defect of zeal of, or after God; "for {saith he} I bear them record, they have a zeal of God;" if this would have served their turns, to be zealous for God himself, there was no defect in that; the Apostle will testify for them, that they were exceeding cordial and not in respect of themselves, but in respect of God himself; they had not a zeal simply for their own base ends, but had an eye to God himself; it was a zeal of God, whether you consider it as wrought by God, or as tending unto him; either way, their zeal was a zeal of God, a zeal after God. I know, that there may be a zeal wrought by God in respect

of common mercy, or in respect of peculiar mercy; this was a zeal of the common mercy of God.

Thus much in effect, I have spoken heretofore upon this text; upon which I made several enquiries; as, first, what righteousness of their own this was, which they went about to establish. Secondly, what is it to establish a man's own righteousness? Which likewise I have handled in my former discourse upon this text. Notwithstanding, I shall, at this time, speak something more largely concerning the second, and so, if the time will permit, proceed unto the rest of my enquiry; but, by the way, I shall speak something concerning the zeal here mentioned by the Apostle.

Therefore, before I quit these words, give me leave to tell you that it is possible a person may have a zeal of God, and yet be far from being a believer; let that be the first observation; I ground it thus; of the Jews of whom Paul speaks, he himself "bears record, they had a zeal of God;" but, in the next words he says, "they established their own righteousness, and did not submit to the righteousness of God." A zeal of God is not ground or evidence enough that a person is a believer or that he hath received or submitted himself to Christ. First, Beloved, because this may seem to be harsh, I beseech you to consider seriously, how undeniable and clear the position I have laid down is founded in the text itself; I say, there may be a zeal of God in an unbeliever; so the Apostle bears record of these Jews; there was "a zeal of God, yet not according to knowledge;" even when they had it, "they established their own righteousness; they did not submit to the righteousness of God." I will not dwell upon this point; all that I shall say on it, is only that I may undeceive many that are very subject to deceive themselves; and that I may take them off from a sandy foundation; and so, if it be possible, reduce them to a rock, who are apt to build upon the sand.

I know, beloved, it is cried up much in the hearts of many poor wretches; I say, cried up much, that if they have but a zeal of God in their hearts, it is enough to serve them forever; they are believers, members of Christ; and it is injurious unto the people of God, as they think, to tell them, that those that have a zeal

of God in their hearts, yet, for all that, may "not submit to the righteousness of God;" but stumble at the stumbling-stone, and fall forever.

All the difficulty, I know, lies in this, what it is for persons to have a zeal of God? Or whether there be not a zeal of God in those that are believers, which is palpably discerned, from that in those that do not submit to the righteousness of God? I grant, there is a difference; but as this zeal of God hath reference to our righteousness or unto an obedience to the Law, you will hardly find a difference. A zeal of God to set up God in Christ, to give Christ the pre-eminence in all, that nothing is to be done with him, but only by Jesus Christ; to throw down everything in the world that offers to come in with Christ, to deal with the Father; I say, a zeal of God, in this kind, is not common to any person, that submits not to the righteousness of God; but to be zealous, that is to say, to be cordial, hearty, real, and that with fervency, and earnestness of spirit, towards obedience to the commandments of God, and to have an eye, in such obedience, to God himself, to seek him in it; this, I say, is a zeal of God that is common unto such as do not submit to the righteousness of God, as well as to those that do submit to it; therefore, as there is a community in this zeal, so this is not possibly able sufficiently to clear up to persons, that because they are thus zealous, therefore they are the children of God, and have the righteousness of Christ.

These Jews, the Apostle here speaks of, {mark it well, beloved,} were exceeding vehement, even in setting up and promoting obedience to the commandments of God. I say, with an earnestness of spirit; as when they offered to stone Christ himself, {the Pharisees I mean,} it was merely out of the extremity of their zeal, and fervency of spirit, because they conceived he was a great blasphemer, and breaker of God's will, for making himself equal with God; how could they contain themselves, so long as Christ would, as they thought, usurp and presume so far as to take the incommunicable privileges and immunities of God himself? The Apostle saith of himself, and of the rest of the Jews, "if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;"

and, {saith he,} though I persecuted the church of God, yet "I did it ignorantly in unbelief." {I Tim.1:13} All this results to thus much, that the mere encroaching upon God, as they understood, was that which put them on so hot, eager, and violent a revenge of God's quarrel; so that, I say, the eye may be upon God, and, for his sake, men may be exceeding zealous, earnest, and fervent for the vindication of him, for the doing of his will revealed in the Law; and yet, for all this, there may not be a submitting to the righteousness that is in God.

I apply it thus, there are many people in the world, to whom the mind of God, in the Law, is made known; we must not commit adultery, &c., simply because God commands this thing, they refrain from the evil; they go through all the commandments of God zealously; they look upon it as the will of God revealed to them, and do it for God's sake, thus imparting his own mind; they abstain and refrain from the evil they do, and perform the good, because God requires it of them; yet all this is no argument of a person's being a real member of Christ; for all this, he may not submit to the righteousness of Christ.

Now I will add something, according as I proposed, to which hath been heretofore said unto the second enquiry, namely, how, and wherein our righteousness is established instead of the righteousness of God. First, then, observe, that these Pharisees "went about to establish their own righteousness," saith the Apostle; this righteousness they went about to establish, what was it? A righteousness according to the Law of God; "Christ is the end of the Law to everyone that believes;" as if he had said, you, in the zeal of your spirits, think to come to the end of the Law yourselves, but mistake not, if you have in your eye the expectation of comfort and peace, and rest in your spirits, from the largeness of your spirits in the performance of those duties this is enough to make you miscarry, though it be for the Lord's sake you do it. Let me tell you, that the Lord hath so established Christ, for the rest and life of men, that if they could yield angelic obedience, be perfect throughout in obedience to the whole Law of God, and not fail in one point of it; if, I say, from such perfection

of obedience they would gather up their own comfort, or conclude their own salvation; these persons should be damned, as well as those that sin ever so much; for God hath established Christ, and only his righteousness to be the salvation of man; I say, only the righteousness of Christ; that if a man were ever so perfect, and in respect of that perfection, would leave the righteousness of Christ, and lean to the perfection of his own, for his peace, and salvation; that man would miscarry, and be damned.

Beloved, all I aim at is this, that you build not upon foundations that will fail you, when you come to the trial; there is {as you shall hear by and by, if time and strength permit} absolutely perfection enough in the righteousness of Christ alone, for your rest and security, that you shall not need to trust to anything you do for peace or life; this is that which God calls you to, to go forth from your own righteousness, to rest solely and only upon the righteousness of Christ, if ever you mean to have comfort in this world, and in the world to come.

You will say peradventure, this is the way to destroy all righteousness and obedience whatsoever; what, a man never jot the better, though he be ever so zealous for God, although his eye and aim be after God in his zeal; to what purpose serves all this then, will you say?

I answer, the world is grown to a miserable pass, that obedience, zeal, and seeking after God, must be of no use at all, except a man himself be a gainer by his obedience; it is now, as it was in the time of the Psalmist, {Psalm 4,} everyone will be ready to cry out; "who will show us any good?" This is the common out-cry in the world; if anything in the world be proposed to men to be done, they answer, but what shall I get by it? That is the next word presently; am I put upon such, and such an employment, saith one; but what shall I gain by it? As in those offices of employment that carry about with them a great deal of labour and expense of time, and bring no profit in to the person in the office; every man will be ready to shun such an office, nay ready to buy out such employment; this is the case of the world, in things appertaining unto God; what doth the Law call me out

unto such duties and employments, such zeal and fervency, to be hot in these services and duties, and to have mine eye upon God in the performance of them, and all this do me no good? I had as good sit still and do nothing. But there are some good common-wealth's-men indeed, who you know have in respect of others prosperity, put themselves to trouble and charge, and be so far from getting, that they shall be losers by their office; and yet for the common-wealth's good, they will willingly put themselves on, when they are called out to such employments; and I must tell you, except you mind chiefly, that all the duties you perform, are for other ends and purposes than your own preferment, and to benefit yourself thereby; namely, the setting forth the praise of the glory of God's free-grace, and the serving your generation in which you live, and the study of good works because they are profitable to men; I say, except you will fall upon the performance of duties, for the common good and benefit, without having any such conceits as what shall accrue to you thereby; you are not persons yet come to have that common spirit, and dead to the old spirit, as becomes Christians.

I must tell you and that freely, there is not any duty you perform, when you have attained the highest pitch that hath any prevalency and availableness to produce any, though the least good to themselves. I say it again, there is nothing you can do, from whence you ought to expect any gain unto yourselves by doing; you ought not to seek to find in what you do, nor to think to bring Christ to yourselves by doing. "You are not your own," saith the Apostle, "you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits." Christ hath redeemed us, "that we should not henceforth live to ourselves, but to him that died for us." [55]

55 The Doctor's meaning is not, that no good is enjoyed in a way of duty; for, in the former discourse on this text, he not only observes, that our righteousness is useful, to manifest our thankfulness to God, and by it we serve our generation; but it is the ordinance of God, wherein he hath appointed us to meet with him, and wherein he will make good the things he has before promised; and accordingly he pours out himself in grace and love, according to his promise; but the sense is, that there is no virtue and efficacy in any duty performed to procure any good things for us or to entitle us to it; nor should we do any with this view, or expect any on such an account; but should perform duty without mercenary or selfish views, purely from a spirit of

The Scripture is marvelous plentiful in this, that no believer for whom Christ died, should have the least thought in his heart of promoting or advancing himself, or any end of his own by doing what he doth; and though, as people may think, here is a marvelous discouragement to persons, to do what God calls them to do, when they shall have nothing for it; I answer, when there is a spirit of ingenuity {as you know there is even in the world} they shall be industrious to glorify God, and do good to men, as if they did it for themselves; they shall do as much for good already bestowed, as if they were to procure it by their own doing.

Secondly, I answer, there can be no discouragement at all unto the performance of anything God calls for at your hands, though you get nothing in the world by what you do; I say, there is no discouragement, because you cannot propose or intend to yourselves any possible gain by duty; but that, whatever it is, that is a spur and encouragement unto it, is already freely and graciously provided for you to your hand; that all your industry could not compass and bring in, either so certainly or so plentifully as the very grace of God, before the performance of any duty, hath provided and established that good for you.

When you fall upon humiliation, fasting, prayer, weeping, and self-denial, what do you look for? In the diversity of judgment, saith one, I get this by it, prevention of many great evils hanging over my head; another saith, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, assurance of the pardon of sin, and of reconciliation with God; these things would I get by attending upon ordinances, by serving God day and night, in that way he calls me out unto; I tell you plainly, there is none of all these things that you do that conduce a jot towards the obtaining of any of these ends you propose to yourselves; all you do gets not a jot; nay, doth not

ingenuity, from a principle of love and gratitude; knowing that all good things, for time and eternity, are already provided in Christ, and are or will be bestowed on us, through him, and for his sake; and not on account of any duty of ours, which ought not to be put in the room of Christ, and made an idol of; which is the Doctor's view, in these and other expressions of the like nature. See Chauncy's "Neonomianism Unmasked," part 2, pgs. 256, 290, 291, &c., a book worthy to be read by both the friends and foes of Dr. Crisp; being a vindication of these discourses of his throughout, from the falsehood, misrepresentations, calumnies, and objections of D. W. in his Gospel Truth Stated, &c. Gill.

concur in it.

You will say then, we had as good sit still, as good never whit as never the better; he that works all day, and gets nothing more than he had in the morning, had as good sit still, and do nothing. I answer, let me tell you, the prevention of evil, if there be reality of evil in it, and the obtaining of good, if there be a reality of good, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, pardon of sin, infallibility of miscarriage, the light of the countenance of God; all these, I say, which you aim at when you are encouraged to duty, are provided abundantly for you, and established firmly upon you, by the mere grace of God in before ever you perform anything whatsoever. To what purpose do men propose ends to themselves, which ends are accomplished before their proposition? Hath God settled all things pertaining to life and godliness in his Son Jesus Christ upon you for his own sake, and settled them everlastingly and unchangeably upon you; that heaven and earth shall pass away, before a tittle of the grant of God, made freely for his own sake, shall pass? I say, hath he settled all things, so that there can come nothing to make them more secure, than the grant of God himself hath made them? To what purpose then do we propose to ourselves, the gaining of that to ourselves by our labour and industry which is already become our own before we labour a jot? There are some children in the world, I know, that are very vigilant and very observing of their parents; and their end and aim is, that by such compliance their fathers may settle a good inheritance upon them; but suppose a child hath manifested to it, that his father had already passed over all his goods and land to him; and hath made a firm deed of conveyance, and cannot call it back or in; he hath passed over so much, and so firmly, he is not able to add to that, that is passed over before-hand; will such a child propose to himself, in his obedience and observance, the obtaining of that good his father hath already passed? He knows that it is passed already, and cannot be by anything he doth firmer and stronger; he serves not now to get his father's lands, but he serves to honour his father that so freely hath settled his land upon him. So I say of believers, that have the temper of Christ's true

bred children indeed; they, in the gospel of Christ, find all things that appertain to life and godliness; they find them all so passed over by God's goodness and free-grace to them, that the lions shall want, and suffer hunger, before they shall lack any thing that is good; must they now labour to gain these things as if they were in agitation, and as if they were yet referred to their good or evil walking; that as they shall walk, so they shall speed? This is to argue that God is yet to determine within himself, how to dispose of the good things that he will bestow upon his people, and that he gives good things according to their good or evil carriage; and so the goodness of God to his people must depend upon their goodness to him; and that as men's works will prevail with God, so God will pour out his bounty unto them. {Ez.36:32}

But, without respect to good or evil, as I said before, the Lord hath everlastingly established all that ever he meant to do; and no more will he do to the end of the world to any people he hath chosen in his Son. The Lord in Christ from everlasting hath set down peremptorily what he will do for you; and there are no intervening acts and carriages of yours that make any alteration in him at all to cross out what he hath written, and to put in what he had left out; he doth nothing to his people upon conditions in them, as if he referred himself still to those conditions, and suspended what he meant to do to them, till he perceived how they would carry themselves to him. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." {Eccl.3:14,15} "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." {James 1:17}

All that I aim at is this, to let people know that it is not a vain thing to yield due obedience to anything that God requires; though the Lord intend not, that by our obedience, we shall gain something, which in case of our failing, we shall miscarry of; I say, the Lord hath firmly established upon his own people every

thing that concerns their peace, comfort, and good, simply and merely for his sake, without respect or regard to anything they perform; all that they are to do, they are not to do it with any eye to their own advantage, that being already perfectly completed to their hands before they do anything; but simply with an eye to glorify God, and serve their generation, and therein to serve the Lord, and set forth the praise of the glory of his grace that hath done so abundantly for them. Oh; that men were but so far enlightened, to behold how graciously the Lord hath provided for them; that he doth not now leave himself in a kind of suspense to deal well or ill with them, as they should carry themselves well or ill to him. "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him; and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." {Job 23:13} "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." {Mal.3:6}

I know that the contrary to this rises in the hearts of men that have not yet received the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ; having this conceit, as if all the carriages of God to men were according to their carriage to him; but here is no such thing, this is but the establishing of man's own righteousness to expect the dealings of God to him, as he himself deals with God, and that, therefore, he will be righteous, that he may be happy. Oh! I beseech you, enter seriously into your own thoughts, and consider, whether or not this be not to bring back again the covenant of works, even to believers; namely, that it shall fare well or ill with them, as they obey, or disobey the Lord God. The Apostle, in this chapter, {vs.5,} doth expressly tell us what the covenant of works was. "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." I pray mark it well, this is the righteousness of the Law that he himself, in the next verse, opposes to the righteousness of God, that he calls the righteousness of faith. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them; but the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; or,

who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach." I say that the covenant of works stands upon these terms, so much doing, so much life; on the other side "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Law to do them." {Gal.3:10} Here is the other branch of the covenant of works, so far as I fail in doing, so far must I be under the curse. Now you can look for no better than wrath and vengeance from heaven, so long as you run on in these principles, and make them the foundation of your good; so far you make yourselves liable to the covenant of works; no more good, comfort, peace, or rest, but as you can do this, and that. What is this else, but, "do this and live?"

I beseech you to enter into your own hearts concerning this particular. When you yield obedience to God, you come to church, go to prayer, and fall to fasting, weeping, mourning, self-denial, keeping the Sabbath and dealing righteously, honestly, and justly with men; what is it you aim at in all this? That God may do you good, that he may be gracious and loving to you, that he may speak peace to your spirits; then, it necessarily follows, that life is that in your eye that puts you upon that which you do, and so you do, that you may live; this is the righteousness of the Law, that righteousness which is opposed to the righteousness of faith. Now know, that there is no submitting to the righteousness of God, while there is an establishing of the righteousness of the Law of Moses; namely, to do righteousness that you may live; to refrain from evil, to the end you may not be cursed; he that proposeth cursing or life, cursing if he do not do, or life if he do the will of God; he that proposeth this, is "under the Law, and not under grace."

Christ, as you hear in the next verse; "is the end of the Law for righteousness, to everyone that believes." What is that? He is the end of the curse of the Law; he is the end of the life of the Law; there is no curse to be pronounced on a believer, when he breaks the Law; there is no life to be expected by the believer

upon his obedience to the Law. Christ is the end of the life and curse of the Law. Christ himself being made a curse for us, as it is written, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." {Gal.3:13} Secondly, "our life is hid with God in Christ;" he is the life, no life but in the Son; "he that hath the Son, hath life; he that hath not the Son, hath not life," saith the Apostle. {I Jn.5:12} All this argues plainly, that all that life that is to be expected, whether it be life itself, or the conducing of things that appertain unto the comforts of it; all this is to be expected from the Son of God, and not from any obedience to the Law. If thou, at any time, read a curse to thyself, upon any transgression of the Law, and darest receive it against thyself, in respect of that transgression, Christ is not the end of the Law to thee; namely, thy soul takes not Christ as the full curse of the Law, taking it all away, that otherwise the Law would pronounce and execute upon thy person.

Beloved, I need not apologize; you know what the Apostle speaks, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;" upon which {saith the Apostle} "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." {II Cor.5:19,20} I think I need not make an apology; he that is a minister of the Gospel ought to declare and proclaim this reconciliation to you, by God's own Son Jesus Christ; peace through him, peace and atonement through his blood alone. Either we are the ministers and messengers of Christ, or the ministers of Moses; we are either the ministers of the covenant of works, or the messengers of the covenant of grace; so far as we urge upon you, as you do, you shall live, and as you do evil, you shall be accursed; so far we are the ministers of the covenant of works. But, when we come and say, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" that is, if we say that Christ bare the curse, and that you need not fear it, though you fall into sin; you may be sure that God hath reconciled you so in his Son, that your

falls {being believers} shall not break peace between God and you; this peace is everlasting; it is unchangeable; God is not a friend today with his people, and falls out with them tomorrow; "whom he loves, he loves to the end;" now this is our business to draw people unto Christ. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." {Jn.13:1}

And we may do some good to let you see what advantage there is in Christ for you; for thereby you may be induced not to establish your own righteousness against him, and his. We shall sin every day; in many things we sin all; but the business we are to do, is this, to let you know, that though there be sins committed, yet there is no peace broken; because the breach of peace is satisfied in Christ; there is a reparation of the damage before the sin itself be committed. Christ had in his eye, and so had the Father too, all the damages that should fall out to the end of the world, by his own people; and he did not pay a price for some that were present only, but he paid the damages of all that should come after, from the time of his suffering, to the end of the world; he paid the uttermost farthing for everyone at once; though, it may be, one sin is committed today, another is committed tomorrow, and the other the third day; God hath reconciled himself to you in Christ, for this sin committed today, and that which will be tomorrow, and so for all the rest to the end of your lives, they are paid for already; this is that which will make up the peace of a believer. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." {Rom.15:13} That is worth observation, beloved, the joy of a person can never be full, the peace of a man can never be complete, as long as there is suspicion; there will be quarrelling again. What saith the soul? I sin now and shall tomorrow; and when I sin, God will fall out with me, be angry with me, and turn away from me; I say, as long as there is such suspicion, there will never be fulness of peace and joy. Hence it is, that persons, till they came to receive the Gospel of Christ, were, through fear of death and wrath, subject to bondage all their life long; but, when they come to

have this peace that Christ hath purchased, he having made an atonement, and given rest, in that he hath paid all the old scores at once; then they may perceive, though there be sin committed; yet, notwithstanding, God will not now fall out again with them; for he had an eye upon all these sins, when Christ suffered, and took full satisfaction of his Son for this very sin; now though I sin today, God took full satisfaction of his Son for the sins of this day; nay more, he hath acknowledged satisfaction for them all; for the LORD beheld "the travail of his soul," and was satisfied; for that which is to come, as well as that which is past; God, in Christ, hath given a full discharge.

Look upon the account, and you shall find that Christ paid and reckoned not only for sins past and present, but for sins committed to the end of days. Therefore, in Daniel 9:24, you shall find this excellent prophecy, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Here by seventy weeks he prophesies of the distance between the time in which he spake, and the time wherein Christ should suffer; and what should he suffer for? For the finishing transgression, and for the putting an end to sin; and for the making reconciliation, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. Mark, when these seventy weeks are ended, Christ is come, then there is a finishing of transgression; there is a great deal of weight in the very word, the "finishing of transgression;" for when is a thing finished? When all is done, and nothing more needs to be done or added to it. This church was finished, when the lead was laid, and the windows glazed, and no workman had anything more to do. Now the time of Christ's suffering was the time of finishing transgression; as much as to say, Christ made an end of sin; that is, God had no more in the world to reckon with persons for sins, after Christ in that suffering of his, had paid the full price of every transgression. Beloved, if God come to reckon now with believers for sin, either he must ask something of them, or not; if not, why are they troubled?

Why must they come under the rod, as it were, to make up that which is not yet paid? How doth Christ then perfect for ever them that are sanctified? {Heb.10:14} And how are they saved to the uttermost that come to God by him? {Heb.7:25} When men are saved to the utmost, there needs no more to be done; if so, you must know, that God cannot bring a new reckoning. There is not such dishonesty in any honest man in the world; he that hath taken all the debt of a surety, and given acquittance under his hand, will not come upon the principal again, a poor beggar, and tell him, "I must have something of you;" the poor man will answer him, "Sir, you have received sufficient satisfaction already of my surety;" he is not an honest man that will ask more. Christ is the Surety of a better covenant. God took Christ's bond, and he paid it; and, as he took his pay, when he received it, he acknowledged that he had received satisfaction. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." {Is.53:11} The travail of Christ gave the Father such satisfaction, that he acknowledged that he was satisfied in it; why, therefore, should he come upon you again? And if God will not come upon you again, what need you fear? It is true, as sin is contrary to the nature of God, so we ought with all reverence to make use of the help of the Spirit to oppose all sin whatsoever; but for any hurt; which such sins shall do us, it is not possible; for Christ hath made satisfaction.[56] "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him." Did God wound Christ for sin? If he did, it was to some purpose, or to none; if it were to purpose, then it pleased the Father to wound him, that those that were to be wounded might not be wounded; and hath Christ saved his people from wounding, then what need we fear that we shall be wounded for our transgressions?

But if we commit sin, God will punish us. I answer, this is to make the sufferings of Christ of none effect; for, if he had not suffered, you could but be wounded; but if he was wounded for you, why do you disparage his sufferings, by this false jealousy

56 By hurt is meant the hurt of punishment, penal evil, which Christ has bore and took away from his people; so that they shall never be affected with it, he having fully satisfied for their sins. Gill.

and suspicion of yours? And besides, you will never rest in peace all the days of your life, till you go out of yourselves to the Lord Christ, and see fulness in him, and such fulness and perfection in him, that there needs no addition to what he hath done. "In him, {saith the Apostle,} "dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and "we are complete in him;" and is it so? There is no fear, then, that God should look upon you as abominable, loathsome things any longer; there is inconsistency between a lovely person, and an ugly loathsome one; you are complete in Christ; now, being complete in him, you are lovely in the sight of the Father. In Ezekiel, chapter 16, the prophet tells us, for thy beauty became "perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD." {vs.14} Here is a person in blood, in a loathsome condition; but, for all this, as loathsome as he is in himself, and in his own nature; yet here is perfection of beauty, and that through the comeliness of Christ; now can the Lord abhor that which hath perfection of comeliness in it? Whosoever is in Christ hath all the comeliness of Christ upon him. Now as you look out of yourselves, and your filthiness, and look upon yourselves as you are in him; so you shall have not only rest and peace; but joy, and joy unspeakable and glorious, as in Isaiah 35:10, an excellent place; "and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Some interpret these words of the glory in heaven; but it is returning to Zion, and not returning to heaven; Zion is the church of God upon earth; they return to Zion; that is, they return to Christ in his church upon earth; they shall return with songs, and everlasting joy; and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

This is not impossible, you will say; but you know many of the people of the Lord Jesus, that walk sadly and disconsolately, not having this joy and gladness. I answer, there is nothing that hinders the joy of God's people, but their sins; these, as they conceive, stand as a separation between God and them. Oh; they stand as a cooling card in all their joys and mirth; but when they

return to Zion, they shall rejoice in that they shall see, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God hath cleansed them from all sin; in that the Lamb of God hath taken away all their sins; the scapegoat having carried them away into the land of forgetfulness; in that all their transgressions are blotted out as a cloud, and God will remember their sins no more; in that they are all fair, having no spot before the Lord in them; when they shall come, by the sight of the glory of the Gospel, and the light thereof, to behold this estate that Christ hath brought them into; then all matter of sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and the bitterness of it shall be taken away; and then that which was the occasion of bitterness shall vanish too.

I do not say, that he is no believer that hath not this perfectly; far be it from me to say so; there are that are believers that are weak; and there are believers that are strong in faith. The more the light and glory of the Gospel shines in the true intention of God to his people; the more shall they return to their rest, the more shall they have joy and gladness.

Why then, may not a believer say as David did, "the Lord hath been very bountiful to me, that I may return to my rest." God hath done everything in Christ, and taken away all things that can disturb my peace and comfort.

SERMON XI
GOD REMEMBERS NOT OUR SINS

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25}

To have an evangelist, a day-star, to be visited in lightsome times, though it be a matter of great grace; yet is it not cause of so great admiration, as to have the sun shining in a dark night is matter of wonder; and yet there was a spiritual eye among the Jews, that was able to see {in their darkest days} a glorious sun in their firmament; this eye was this evangelist Isaiah. I rather call him an evangelist than a prophet for his bringing glad tidings of good things, tidings of exceeding great joy. The Apostle Paul himself, the great doctor of the Gentiles, and the main exalter

of Christ and the grace of God in him, goes not beyond this evangelist; speaking so fully, clearly, and sweetly of the freeness of God's love, even while persons are in the lowest and worst of conditions.

Besides all other expressions of his, this very text that I have read unto you is enough to make him an evangelist indeed; for here he evangelizes, or preaches the gladdest tidings that ever could come to the sons of men; for herein he proclaims liberty to the captives, and binds up the broken-hearted. This very expression of his is one of the greatest causes that "the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away;" as the same prophet hath it in chapter 35:10.

Now that we may see more fully the sweetness of marrow and of wine well refined on the lees, contained in this text; it will be of very great importance and concern to understand clearly and fully to whom, or of whom, the Lord by this prophet speaks these words. It is true, a pardon is a welcome thing to a condemned malefactor; but a pardon for this man, when another that goes to execution hath none, is so far from being a comfort to him that suffers, that it doth but augment his misery and torment.

If the Lord for his own sake blots out the iniquity of such and such, and not the iniquity of others, it is but the augmentation of the misery of that person that hath no share in it. In verse 4, the Lord mentions Jacob indeed, but, in the sequel, he makes it appear, that he intends not Jacob according to the flesh, but after the spirit; for this Jacob and Israel are that company and assembly of people, that are brought together from the ends of the earth; from the east, west, north, and south, as we have it expressed in verse 5, 6. But, beloved, that you may see plainly who this Jacob and Israel are, observe but one expression in verse 7, "even every one that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." "Thou that are called by my name," saith the Lord; these are the persons whose iniquities the Lord blots out; what name is that? The name of "the

Lord thy Saviour," verse 11. Now there is no people in the world, nor the Jews themselves; that had so plain a name of their Saviour upon them, as we have that are Gentiles, that are Christians; we have the true name of Christ a Saviour upon us, Christians from Christ.

And least people should think, that when the Lord proclaims this grace in the text, of blotting out iniquity and transgression, he looks for some qualifications and dispositions that may be amiable to win so much grace from him; do but observe, I pray, {and it is very observable indeed} the two or three verses before my text; and you shall see plainly how careful the Lord is to take off all such conceits from men, all imagination of any such expectation. There must be first graciousness, they must be first well qualified, and then their iniquities shall be blotted out, so might some think; mark how the Lord takes it off; for in these two verses, he draws to the very life the qualifications and conditions of those whose iniquities he blots out; mark them well, "but thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;" and then upon these words follows the text; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:22-25} Mark, the words {thy transgressions} have reference to the persons spoken of before, these who had not called upon the Lord, who had been weary of him, with transgressions that had wearied him; and transgressions, that had "made me to serve with thy sins." So that the point from hence is this that the Lord, for his own sake, blots out the transgressions, and remembers not the sins, even of those that have not called upon him, that have been weary of him, and wearied him, and made him serve with their transgressions.

I make no question, but that this doctrine which I have laid

down, will be received of all that will but receive clear scripture; I have not added one tittle in it more than is expressed in the words themselves; and therefore I shall be the more bold to build upon such a rock as this is. That we may the better come to the words, or rather to our comfort in them, we have these particulars very observable.

First, the grace held out to these persons; and that is expressed by two phrases. First, the "Lord blots out thy transgressions." Secondly, the Lord "will not remember thy sins."

Secondly, besides the grace held forth, let us consider the original or fountain from whence it springs; it is "I even I {saith the Lord} the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, thy Saviour;" for so you have it expressed all along the chapter.

Thirdly, you may consider here the motive that prevails with God to extend this grace that he shows to his people, and that is a remarkable passage; the motive is not in, nor from the creature; it hath its spring and rise immediately from the Lord alone; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions; for mine own sake I do it."

Finally, you may consider to whom this grace is extended; "that blotteth out thy transgressions," saith the text, and will not remember thy sins; that is, to those persons mentioned before, of which I have spoken, that have wearied him with their sins; of these briefly.

First, concerning the grace that the Lord is pleased to hold forth to his people here, namely, "the blotting out their transgressions and not remembering their sins." First, let us consider what it is for the Lord to blot out transgressions; it is an usual phrase in the scripture, and imports much comfort in it; it is an allusion, or an allegorical expression; wherein the Lord is pleased to hold forth his love to man, after the manner of men; to set forth his carriage to men, according to theirs one to another. It is a phrase borrowed from the practice of men that keep their debt-books, wherein they enter, and record the several debts men owe them; that so, for the better helping of their memory, they may find what is due, and know what to demand and call for; I

say, the Lord here speaking of "blotting out of transgressions," hath reference to such debt-books wherein he hath recorded the several debts, or sins, which he enters as men commit them; now the blotting out is nothing else, but that, whereas there were such and such transgressions in the record of God, he draws a blot over them. And that he here hath reference to such kind of dealing, in blotting out transgressions, you may see clearly manifested unto you in Colossians 2:14, where this phrase of blotting out is explained; "and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" now, mark what follows; "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." What "the hand-writing of ordinances" there is, you may plainly perceive by the words going before, namely, "all our trespasses, and all our sins." Now the taking away of sin, is called a "blotting it out," and expressed thus, "the blotting out of the hand-writing that was against us;" because they were, as it were, written down; but the Lord hath razed and blotted them out. You are not to conceive that there are really such things with God, that he did indeed keep a book, and enter down in it all the several actions of men, and so calling men to account, will open it, and will read out the several things there written; but the phrase is only an allusion spoken for our better capacity.

And, for this cause, you shall find the Scripture frequently makes mention of such books God hath. When the seventy disciples came to Christ, rejoicing that the devils were made subject unto them, he replies, "notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." {Lk.10:20} Here is a book and the names of the disciples written in it; but, if you will mark Revelation 20:12, you will find, there is not only the book of life, but other books besides, out of which the dead, both small and great, were judged, according to their works that they had done; as if he had said, besides the book of life, there is the book of works, wherein the several actions of men are recorded, by which,

at the great day, men are to be judged as they are found in them; according to the several debts that are therein, they are to receive their sentence. Mark, now, for the better apprehension of our weak capacity, the Lord hath taken up such a kind of illustration of his dealing with men; namely, by recording our debts in books; yet, he tells us for our comfort, that, though there be such books, we need not fear; though they shall be opened, yet whatsoever was written in them, in reference to us, is all crossed and blotted out; and, when we come to account, there shall be nothing reckoned unto us as a fault. {Jude 24}

For the better illustration of this, that what comes after may be the clearer, you must understand, that, though it be true in the succession of ages, the several members of Christ do severally day after day commit now some, then more, and afterwards more transgressions; though this be actually done in succession of time, yet the all-seeing eye of the Lord looks over all, that ever should be done, from all eternity; and then, as it were with himself, writes down the several actions and transgressions of men, that afterwards should be committed; he registers them at first with himself, and this is all the book that God keeps, and all the entries of actions with him. {Ps.147:5} Now, whereas the Lord in his eternal foresight took notice of every action that you and I have done, do, or shall do hereafter; he also took notice of the nature and quality of such actions; yet, when he had done, he drew a cross over them all; for though he saw these things thus done, yet he took a course that he would be another way satisfied for everything that he could demand in respect of them; and so they should remain no longer upon the heads of those persons. As for example, suppose that a man owes, upon a bill of parcels, an hundred pounds; all these parcels are written in a book under his name upon his head; after a time a surety comes and takes all this debt, and enters it upon his own head, under his own name, he being an able man; upon this the creditor is pleased to take him for his debtor, and so transcribes every parcel of the debt, from the head of the principal debtor, unto the head of this surety. Now, after all these parcels are entered to the head of the surety, by-and-

by a cross is drawn over the first head, whose debt it was before, until it was brought over unto the surety; this is the "blotting out of transgression" which the Lord here speaks of; and the sense of it is no more but this; though it is true, I know it well enough what thou hast done, and all thou hast done against me, how many and how great transgressions thou hast committed, and hereafter shall commit, though they be all open before me, though thou art the doer of all these, and I know it, yet, saith the Lord, "I will blot out all;" that is, there is not any one of all these to be reckoned for upon thy head; but I have passed them all upon another, and he hath made to me, and I have acknowledged, full satisfaction; I have no more to say to thee.

Here then, is the sum of this grant of the free grace of God; "the blotting out of transgression." You know, beloved, the use of writing debts in a book, namely, that a creditor may turn-over at pleasure or leisure to them; and so, when he looks there, he may find what every person owes, and at discretion, may take the ground-work of his action that he lays against a person; and upon this action arrest him, and lay him up in prison, till he pays the debt. And so likewise, you know what the end of this "blotting out" is; namely, that when men come to look over their books they may skip over what was written; and, when the book is looked over, no notice shall be taken of such a man's name, who, though he was entered in it, yet all is blotted out again; and imports to us thus much to the thing in hand, that though the Lord, according to the usual manner of taking, notice of actions against men, hath his time when he will take notice of these debts, when he enters the debtor, when he will arrest and clap him up for them; yet, when he shall look over his book, he shall take no notice of such persons whose parcels are crossed out. Therefore, in Jeremiah 50:20, see how the prophet alludes to this expression, and how he explains the words, "blotting out of transgression." "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve." Here he seems to represent the Lord as one that begins to look over his

books, to see what debts are owed unto him; as if he were making a search. Well, saith the Holy Ghost, though at such a time the sins of the people be sought for, yet there shall be none; it is true, they were all entered into the knowledge of God from all eternity, yet there shall be none; that is, though they were entered, they are blotted out again; therefore, as it is in a debt-book, though there be never so many parcels entered, entered ever so truly there, yet, when once that which was entered is blotted out, there is no more debt than if there had never been any; for all that was ever in, is blotted out. So, though the Lord be privy to what they do, and hath recorded them in his own thoughts; yet he himself draws a blot upon them, and makes them to be nothing; whereas, before, till the blot was drawn over them, they were real debts.

And this he doth not simply in respect of forgiveness. In regard of us, it is true, it is a forgiveness, yet, in respect of him, it is not merely forgiveness; for the reason and ground of blotting out of iniquity, is, there is a second head to which these debts are translated from us, that shall pay them better than those whose first they were; so that the debt being paid, God loses nothing, forasmuch as that another hath paid all.

This is one of the most admirable pieces of grace that thirsting souls can desire, if they had all they could wish themselves. Do but think seriously upon it. Suppose a man is privy to himself of murder, felony, and treason, or what else you will; suppose he knows that it is known, and that there are many witnesses to test it; nay, suppose he knew that it were done in the eye and face of the judge himself; that he saw with his own eyes what was done, and that, when all this is done he should be drawn to his trial; alas; in what perplexity of heart would this man be? How would he quake and tremble, and be even at his wit's end. He knows it was publicly done; there is no smothering of it, but that he must justly lie under condemnation for it; the witnesses come in and swear point blank against him; and, yet, suppose, after all pleadings and bitter expectation of the sentence, the judge himself should stand up, and say, I have made search, and there is not one bill of indictment found against this man; there

is not one action that may justly be laid against him, and I have nothing to say to him or against him. How will this make the heart of such a prisoner leap for joy, being so acquitted and dismissed, and having no bill found against him! Just so is our case; we have committed murder, felony, treason, rebellion, and enmity, all that can be against the Lord; we did it in the face of God, that he knows it is done; but, when we come to trial, God himself brings an ignoramus; he himself, saith, here is not one bill of indictment against him; there is nothing but what is blotted out; and the reason is, as I said, because he acknowledgeth that he hath received a full satisfaction from his Son. "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." {Job 33:24} So much for that phrase, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions;" it followeth "and will not remember thy sins;" here is the ignoramus that God himself makes; though the foreman of the grand jury bring in an indictment, yet, saith God, I remember no such matter. Here is a plea against this and that man; {members of Christ, you must suppose them all this while} they are accounted for such and such sinners and transgressors, but I remember no such matter, saith the Lord.

But what is it for God not to remember the transgressions of men in this kind, will some say? I answer, beloved, here the Lord speaks after the manner of men, as he did before; books, you know, are the registers of memory or records for the help of memory rather; when a man comes to his book, to his bills and bonds, and there reads what such and such a man owes, he thereby remembers what debts are due unto him, and from whom; but if he comes to his book, and there can read nothing owing unto him from such a person; he is said not to remember it, so that memory itself fails; can this man now remember his debts that cannot find that he hath any such, that cannot read them? If a man look over his debt-book, and finds there, that though such debts were written, yet now they are so obliterated that no man can read them, and that this blotting was made not casually, but upon consideration of a sufficient satisfaction; how then can he remember these now as debts? Thus the Lord represents himself

to us, he remembers not our sins; that is the transgressions of the members of Christ come not into the thoughts of God, so as now to think that such and such a man stands guilty before him of such a transgression; I say, the Lord hath not in his thought any such thing concerning any member of Christ. Beloved, you shall find it a frequent expression of the Holy Ghost, manifesting the grace of God to his own people; namely that "God doth not remember their sins." David, in Psalm 25:7, prays thus, Lord, "remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD." Remember not the sins of my youth, but look into the covenant of grace, wherein God engages himself to be the God of his people; this is the closure and shutting up of it all; in Jeremiah 31:31, and so on; "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD," in these days, and at that time that "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with them, &c.;" and then the shutting up of the new covenant is in these words, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." {vs.34}

So the Apostle in Hebrews 8:12, repeats the self-same thing, repeating the covenant word for word, and ends it with the same closure, "for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And in Hebrews 10:16,17, though the Apostle abridges the covenant, and leaves out many branches of it, yet he forgets not the last clause of it, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

So it stands for a truth, the people of God are so received into the grace and favour of God, that God doth not, nay he will not remember their sins any more from the time that they are become members of Christ, and actually in covenant with him; from that time for ever more, there is not once a bringing to remembrance with God any one of their transgressions.

But some will say, this seems to be strange; what, God not remember the sins of believers? Suppose he forgives them, yet he must remember them, seeing they are committed every day so clearly and conspicuously in his sight; how is it possible he should not remember them? I answer, beloved, let flesh and blood reason and say what it will; I ask you this question, is it the Lord himself that says, he doth not remember the sins of his people? If he himself speaks it, who art thou, O man, that darest question whether he remembers them or no? Shalt thou say, he remembers their sins, when he himself saith, he will not remember them? The Apostle Paul tells us that "no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God;" {I Cor.2:11;} doth not the Spirit of God tell us this, that "he doth not remember their sins;" and can any man know the things of God better than the Spirit? Thou sayest that God remembers them, when he saith, he doth not remember them.

But some will be ready to say further, how can this possibly be, that God should know every sin that the believer commits, and the believer himself knows the sins he commits, and yet God should not remember them?

I answer, first, suppose I could not untie this knot, or resolve this riddle to you; you must know, beloved, there are deep things of God, that none but he himself can dive into, that none but he is able to resolve; yet, though it could not be resolved, let God be true, and all the world be liars; let not the world's saying, God remembers the sins of his people prevail against his saying, "I will not remember their sins;" let sense, argument, reason, and all stoop to faith, even for the testimony of God's sake alone, though none will speak the same thing, but merely the voice God himself.

But, secondly, let us see whether we can untie this knot or no; how is it possible that the Lord should not remember their sins, seeing they are so plain to him every moment? There is one word in the text, that is not much heeded, and it is that which must resolve this great and difficult question; and that is this, "I will not remember your sins," I will not remember them as

your sins, putting the emphasis upon the word your; and will not remember thy sins, or your sins. It is most certainly true that God remembers all the actions that ever men have done, do, or shall do; he remembers the nature and quality of all actions as they are; he remembers such actions, as done at such times; and he knows they are thus and thus in the nature of them; and yet so it is, that "he remembers not thy transgressions;" that is, though he remembers the things thou hast done, yet he doth not remember them as they are thine; he remembers the things, it is true, but not that they are thine; for he remembers perfectly that they are none of thine; he remembers whose they are, he himself hath passed them over, he decreed that they should become the sins of Christ; and when he passed them over to him, they ceased to be thine any longer.

You know that text in Isaiah 53:6, "the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and you know that place in II Corinthians 5:21, "for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now I ask this question, whose are the sins that believers commit? When Christ became their sin, are they not his? And if they are his, are they any longer theirs that did commit them? II Corinthians 5:19, shows plainly, that the Lord reckons them no longer theirs, when he hath made them once to be Christ's. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" as much as to say, I will never reckon them thine anymore; I will never impute them to thee; all that I look for in respect of thy sins, I look for at the hands of Christ; "for he was made sin for us," saith the text.

And whereas people think it strange, for as much as believers themselves do remember their sins, that God should not remember them; I answer, if any believers or members of Christ remember their sins any otherwise than God remembers them, their memory fails them, and they are mistaken in their remembrance; if when believers have sinned, they have a conceit that their sins shall be charged upon them; the truth is, they have other conceits of themselves than God hath of them; but if they

will remember their sins, as he remembers them, they must remember them, and know them by the light of God's Spirit, that shall lead them into all truth. The Spirit of God will remember them of them indeed, and lay before them such and such actions, and tell them, that they have these pollutions in them, and will convince them of the abhorrency of them; but the same Spirit will remember them withal, that the Lamb of God hath taken away all these sins of theirs; and that the scape-goat hath carried them away into a land of forgetfulness; thus, I say, the Holy Ghost, as it brings their sins to their remembrance, so it will suggest to them also, to whom their sins are sent.

Beloved, it is a matter of admirable grace, full of wonder, yea, even of amazing consolation, that a poor condemned soul by Satan, nay, it may be, by his own conscience, should at last hear the Lord speak, and the last words of God himself to be this, "I remember no such thing." Now, if God himself doth not remember your transgressions, you that are the members of Christ, it is no matter who remembers them; and, therefore, as the Apostle saith in another case, so you may say with comfort in your own spirits, "but with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self." {I Cor.4:3} Beloved, he that said it will stand to it, he will never remember your sins anymore; though they be never so many and never so great, he will never call one of them to remembrance. It may be, in affliction, and when the rod of God is fallen upon thee, thy heart will be ready to raise such thoughts as these in thee; "now God will be even with me; now shall I smart for my transgressions;" but know this, that at that instant when God brings affliction upon thee, he doth not remember any sin of thine; they are not in his thoughts; for the text saith not only of the present instant, that God doth not remember them, but of the future also; nay, of the everlasting future; "your sins, and your iniquities, I will remember no more."

I beseech you, consider this one thing, you that think that God plagues and punishes you, being believers, for such and such sins of yours, and say, doth he not now remember these sins

of mine? Doth he punish such and such sins in others, and take vengeance for them, and doth he not remember them? Doth he use to do things hand over head? Doth he lay his rod and his scourge upon them, and never think of the cause of it? And if these afflictions be the judgment of God for these sins, certainly God must remember them, and so know them as motives and provocations, to inflict such vengeance upon them; and if he punishes them for them, certainly he now remembers them; and what of all this? Is it a truth that God hath spoken that "your iniquities and your sins will I remember no more?" Then surely, whatsoever things befall the children of God, are not punishments for sin, nor remembrances of sin; the Lord must be true and faithful in his covenant; and therefore, if men shall cavil against this free-grace of God, yet let me request this of you, let the evidence of the Holy Ghost so prevail with your spirits, that if any creature in heaven or earth, men or angels, shall endeavour to contradict this, let them be accounted as they deserve; let all give way to this truth; if anything in the world can make it appear to the contrary, then let it go away with it; but, if the Spirit of God speaks it so clearly, that nothing can be objected against it; let not anything cause thee to live in so much darkness and uncomfortableness, as thou must do, till thou receive this grace of the Lord.

And so, beloved, I have done with the second thing. There is one thing more very considerable, and that is what the motive is, that prevails with God, that thy sins and iniquities should be blotted out, and that he should not remember them; what is it that moves him to do this? I find that the channel of men's hearts runs usually this way; Oh! When God beholds my mourning, weeping, and reforming, and knows I am returned unto him by true repentance, and seeth what moan I make, and what a pitiful wretch I am, when he beholds my groanings and my meltings; oh; this cannot but move him to pity me, and to pardon my sins! Oh beloved! Know the Lord hath other manner of motives to prevail with him than all the rhetoric of misery in the creature can possibly be to persuade him to this grace; I say peremptorily, it is not all the sighings, groanings, mournings, fastings, prayers, and

self-denial; nor all the righteousness that men can return to God, that can prevail with him, to blot out their sins and to remember them no more; but the motive is this, "I, even I, for mine own sake do this;" and the Holy Ghost frequently expresses it in such terms, as this, {Ezek.36:32,} after he had laid down the covenant of grace, he concludes with this caution; "not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." Mark it, there is nothing in the creature that moves God to show compassion upon him; but merely for his own sake doth he this to his people.

But how is it that for his own name sake to do it? I answer, it imports two things; first, the Lord doth it for his own sake; that is, he is solely moved to it, by and from himself; and there is no creature in the world doth so much as move him to it; I say, the Lord, when he blots out the transgressions of his people, he is not so much as moved to it, and sought unto for it; there is nothing in the creature to move God to it; but simply of his own mere motion he does it; and this the Apostle expresses in abundant fulness, where, {speaking of redemption,} he tells expressly, that the Lord did all according to his own "good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." {Eph.1:9}

But some will say, you will grant this, that Christ moved God to blot out transgressions. To this I answer, that though Christ moved God to blot them out, yet this stands firm still, that we do not move him to do it.

Secondly, I answer, when we say, that Christ moves God to blot out transgression, I do not separate him from Christ; "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" what he doth in grace to the poor creature, he doth in Christ; and he doth nothing of grace to sinners, absolutely considered in himself, abstractedly from Christ, but as in him.

But, thirdly, take Christ for Mediator, and as he is distinguished from the Father, and then, I say, that he, as Mediator, did not first move God to blot out transgressions; but the motion within himself, from eternity, was the root and fountain of all; yea, even of Christ himself as Mediator; and from this fountain

was he raised up to accomplish these things that first were in his breast; for Christ is the Mediator; that is, he is the means between God and us, to compose this great thing of blotting out our transgression. Now know, that the means are raised up for the bringing about the thing intended; and in nature are after the thing intended as the end; the school-men have a speech, "the end of things is always the first in intention, though it be last in execution." If a man builds a house, he first proposeth to himself to what purpose it is; it is to dwell in; the habitation is first in his thoughts, and then the structure as a means is raised afterwards to that end; so the Lord sits down, and consults with himself, how he may show himself in grace to the creature thus; the creature will sin, and I will blot out their transgressions; but how shall it be done? Well, saith God, I will send Christ into the world; he shall be born of a woman, and die for their sins, having them laid upon him, and shall purchase their redemption; now Christ is the means, he is made a Mediator; but God's determination, concerning the blotting out of transgression, was of his own motion, before there was such a thing as Christ, I mean in both his natures; and Christ, therefore came, because God had determined in his own thoughts, that such a thing should be done by him.

Secondly, God doth this for his own sake, not only of his own mere motion, but for his own end too, for himself. We are apt to think that he blots out our transgressions, that he might do good to us, that we might be made happy by it; it is true, the Lord blotted out transgressions that we might be happy, but yet this is but the subordinate end to him, and stands in subordination to a supreme and higher end; for God aims at his own glory principally; he did not therefore blot out transgressions that we might be the better for it principally; but that he might attain the thing that concerned himself in it.

And therefore, whereas the Holy Ghost speaks in the text of "blotting out transgressions for his own name sake," he adds these words to it, {fore-showing that God aimed at himself more than anything concerning the good of his creatures,} "for the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake;

because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people." {I Sam.12:22} "What wilt thou do unto thy great name;" {Jos.7:9;} if thy people should sin? He speaking of it then in that business of the men of Israel's falling before the men of Ai. The great argument of Joshua, to prevail with God, was the great name of God. "Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known." {Ps.106:8} "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake." {Ps.79:9} The meaning is this; the Lord blots out transgressions for his own sake, that is, he therefore blots them out that his own name and glory might be the more magnified and exalted in the world; so that for his own praise sake, he doth the great things he doth. Therefore the Apostle, in Ephesians 1:6, speaking of redemption, tells us what the great end of it was, namely, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory; remember, break not thy covenant with us." {Jer.14:21}

Now you see what it is for God to blot out transgressions for his own sake; namely, that he might have the praise of the glory of his own grace in doing such marvelous things as he doth; so that you run in a vain course to think that you move God by your importunity and humbling yourselves before him; for he will not be moved with all these to blot out your transgressions; if ever, therefore, you would find a motive whereon to rest indeed satisfied that God will and doth blot them out, run to this, the free thoughts of God, and the bowels in God himself {without regard to what is in you, or done by you, to move him to do it, or to provoke him not to do it} have put him upon this great work for you.

Look into Romans, chapter 9, and you shall there see, that in this business of love, and blotting out sin, the Lord will there manifest himself in grace, while Jacob is in the womb, before ever he could sigh and groan to him; he did it then, that it might appear "not according to works, but according to the purpose

of election," that it might stand altogether "not of works, but of grace;" and so, when souls partake of this grace of the blotting out of iniquity, they may cry out, as the Psalmist did in another case, "not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." {Ps.115:1} And it is certain, that the Apostle tells us that we are justified by the grace of God, not of works, lest any man should boast; and therefore, the Lord will have all the ordering of the work of grace, that the creature shall have no stroke; that when that grace is manifested and he partakes of it, {the creature having no hand in it,} he that glorieth will "glory in the Lord."

SERMON XII

THE GREAT GIVER AND HIS FREE GIFTS

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." {I Cor.2:12}

After a wonted tender-hearted salutation and congratulation to this church of Corinth, from chapter 1, verse 1 to verse 10, the Apostle Paul falls upon a seasonable exhortation to unanimity and concord of spirit among them, relating at large the occasion of this exhortation to them, to wit, the notice he had received of a dangerous strife and contention fallen out among them, in respect of their partiality to persons; this he continues to the 17th or 18th verses of that chapter; and from thence, to the closure of the chapter, he declares both the scope of his ministry in general, and the diversity of success this ministry of his found, both among Jews and Gentiles.

Now, in the beginning of this chapter, the Apostle returns back to this church of Corinth in special; and, whereas, the strife was, "one was of Paul, and another was of Apollos, and another of Cephas," he acquits himself from anything that might; in respect to himself, tend to, or occasion such strife and quarrel; therefore, in verse 1, he wholly disclaims all of man which might tend to exalt man among them where he declares that he "came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom," declaring unto them the testimony of God. Paul's ministry was exercised in a low plain-

dealing way, without either human rhetoric or wisdom of man. This he amplifies in verse 4; for his part, he used no manner of enticing words to inveigle or beguile them.

Secondly, he goes on to declare to them the main subject of his ministry, which he drove at, and which he commends both to ministers and people, as the great thing they were to mind concerning divinity; a rule and pattern well worth imitation of all, verse 2, "for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He did not care that the people should know anything else in the world, so that he might impart Jesus Christ, and him crucified unto them.

Thirdly, he declares to them the reason why he came with such plainness and simplicity, without dress, in the exercise of his ministry, in verse 5, namely, "that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;" as if he should say, they that are wrought upon by human rhetoric, and fineness of language and are taken with respect of any fluency of words, these men's faith is built upon human wisdom. They that are taken with the simplicity of the Gospel, as it is in Jesus, simply preached, their faith is built upon the rock itself.

Now, lest the Apostle's ministry of the Gospel might grow into contempt because he waived that which was human in it; therefore, in the latter end of verse 4, he vindicates the power and life of his ministry, even while it was so plain, and without man's wisdom. Though Paul came not in excellency of speech and man's wisdom, yet he came in "the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." So, though he condescends to the weakness of this church, being but babes in Christ, as he speaks of them; yet he would have them know, though he did, by exercising his ministry in so low and plain a style for their sakes; nevertheless, when he deals with those that are perfect, that is, higher grown, he can rise in a higher flight, and deal in more grown and deeper mysteries than he did with them. And, in verses 7 & 8, he illustrates what depths there were in those mysteries that he preached to those that were capable of seeing them; and that is quoted out of Isaiah 64:4, "but as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither

have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Now, whereas some might be ready to object, as the false prophets did to Micaiah, "Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?" {I Kg.22:24} If wisdom and prudence could not dive into those mysteries Paul spake of, how could he come by them? He was of no more learning than they; they were as much insighted in the Law as he; if they could not, how could he?

He answers in the words following, though "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Let me tell you, there are secrets of God that all the learning in the world shall never attain unto; only the teaching of the Spirit of God acquaints people with them; therefore, it is a branch of the new covenant of God to those in it that "they shall be all taught of God;" and they shall no more need to say to their neighbour, "know the Lord, for they shall all know the Lord;" that is, by his own teaching, for "they shall all be taught of God." It is true, in the ministry of the Gospel, this knowledge comes usually to the people; but it is not the wisdom of man that either doth or can impart the secrets of God to this people; and these are the mysteries; the Apostle saith that he preaches unto those that are more grown and perfect; there is strong meat for those that are old, as well as milk for babes.

Now the Apostle proceeds on, namely, to show how it comes to pass that the Spirit of God, and only the Spirit of God, should impart and communicate these mysteries, when the wisdom of the world cannot possibly bolt them out; saith he, "God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." But some may say, the knowledge of these mysteries may come some other way; to take off that, in the following words, verse 11, he shows expressly, that the mystery of the Gospel can come no other way but by the Spirit of God only, as he will use instruments to himself; I say, the original of

discovering the mysteries of the Gospel is not demonstration by way of argument or discourse, but the demonstration is by the Spirit of God. And the Apostle illustrates it by way of comparison, that the Spirit only is the original of the discovery of the mysteries of God; "as no man knows the things of a man, save the spirit that is in man;" so no man knows "the things of God, save the Spirit of God;" his meaning in this place is this, you have a thought in your hearts, and if you give no hint of it by external expressions, no man can conceive what you are thinking, till you shall some way evidence yourselves; now, as it is impossible for any man to dive into such a thought, so it is as impossible for all the creatures in the world to dive into the mysteries of God; but the Spirit that is of God only reveals them.

Now, in the words of my text, the Apostle begins to draw to a conclusion of this discourse, and to sum it up to a head; for, having given this description in general, concerning the Spirit's revealing things that could not otherwise be seen or known, he concludes that it was his, and the case of others; "now we have not received, &c."

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Beloved, let me tell you, by the way, it is a matter of great consequence and establishment to know the scope and intention of the Holy Ghost in the several portions of Scripture, especially building places that contain life, peace, and joy; and, therefore, I have the more insisted upon the opening of the text; for if you take a portion of Scripture and cut it off from the dependence, you may miss the intention of the Spirit therein; for the words may sound to another sense than the drift is, except the coherence be seen and observed; this, I say, that in reading and preaching, there must be great regard had to what the Holy Ghost principally aims at in Scripture. Thus much in a way of interjection.

In the text there are three things considerable. First, what the Apostle aims at here, or the subject matter he is upon, namely, the manifestation of the things freely given of God; or to impart to us this, that there are things freely given of God to men. Secondly, he speaks of them as they may be known; "that we may know,"

&c. Thirdly, he shows how the knowledge of these things that are freely given of God is attained; and that he sets out, first, negatively, not by the spirit of the world; secondly, affirmatively, by the Spirit that is of God.

The proposition is this, that the things freely given us of God come to be known not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit which is of God being received. I am confident, none here will stumble at the proposition, being so naturally raised from the words of the text; I will not therefore spend time about that. There are these particulars in it worth consideration; and that you may suck and be satisfied at the breasts of consolation, consider; first, what these things are the Apostle speaks of, that are freely given of God. Secondly, what it is for these things to be given. Thirdly, what it is for them to be given freely. Fourthly, what it is to know these things that are thus freely given. Fifthly, how they are made known to us by the Spirit which is of God.

First, what these things are that are freely given us of God, for the illustration of which know first, that it is most certainly true indeed, all things whatsoever are the free gift of God to men; "for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" {Mt.5:45;} and it is the gift of God that he doth it. I will only touch one thing by the way, and be brief in it; know this, if Adam and his posterity, had stood in their innocency, had continued in the royal Law, and never offended, that very life that was annexed unto obedience, I say, that very life had been a free gift; and, therefore, if you speak of merit properly, as requiring a reward proportionally, and having equal power to the work, there could not be merit in a state of innocency; but that very life, had it come from the performance of perfect obedience, had been a gift of God. I will give you one illustration that will satisfy you fully in it; look upon all the creatures, as for instance, upon the sun, that rejoiceth as a giant to run his race; it had its law, as we had, set before it, a kind of duty the very creature performs to the Creator; if God should be bound to reward according to proportion, and so by way of merit, man's obedience with life, why not the obedience of the

sun in the firmament as well as man; the sun is a creature, as man is; as a creature, man hath the same dependence upon the Creator as the sun hath; what hinders but that the sun in the firmament should merit as well as man; seeing it performs as complete obedience in its way as man could do? Beloved, carry this for a principle everlastingly along with you, all that ever the creature partakes of, it hath from God; and so God oweth nothing to it, for that he partakes of, save that he oweth by free grant; had not God freely without motive put himself upon this, that man should have life upon his obedience, he could challenge life no more than any other creature could.

But I will not follow this, these things, in general, not being the things the Apostle principally aims at here; for though it be true, all things in general are the free gifts of God, yet here he speaks of things in a restrained way, of some special things peculiar to the beloved of the Lord; such as the Psalmist speaks of in Psalm 25:14, "the secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant;" or such things as Christ speaks of in Matthew 11:25, 26, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." The things freely given of God are the things the wise of the world cannot reach; they are hid from them; they are revealed and communicated unto babes. What are those things, you will say? I can give you but a touch; for if I dive into the depth of the things, there will be no end, I should never come to the bottom.

First of all, God gives himself, and this is such a gift as is mystery the world doth not reach, for they know not what it is; it is the greatest gift that ever God could give his people to give over himself; it contains in it the most inestimable and invaluable treasure that is in heaven or earth; for God to pass over himself in such a way of propriety, as that he hath no more command over himself, than the creature can have power over him, for that which is good for him; this, I say, is the strangest thing ever was; and yet God gives himself to his people, that is, he gives man as true

a propriety in himself, as he himself hath in himself. You know, the Lord, speaking of giving himself, expresses it thus, "and I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD." {Hos.2:19} "Thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name." {Is.54:5} Mark what the drift of it is, a husband marrying a wife, by God's own appointment, gives himself up to the wife; see how the Apostle expresses it, "the wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife;" {I Cor.7:4;} as much as to say, God being married to a person, he hath not that power over himself, as to deny himself, or the use of himself, to those to whom he hath given himself; the believer hath power with God, so far as God can be useful unto the person to whom he gives himself. There is as much propriety in a believer to God, as there is in a wife to her husband; this giving of himself by a deed of gift is frequently mentioned unto you in scripture, but especially in the covenant of grace; wherever this covenant is repeated, this is the burden of the song, as I may say; this is the great business, "I will be their God, {saith he,} and they shall be my people." Here is the passing of himself over to them; and this is, I say, one of the hidden things and mysteries that are freely given, God passeth over himself freely to us.

Secondly, God gives his son Christ, as well as he gives himself; that is a second deed of gift, giving of his Son to men; this is frequently repeated; "to us a child is born," saith the prophet, {Isa.9:6;} "to us a Son is given," so Isaiah 42:6, as the same prophet tells us what the Lord speaks of Christ; I will "give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Here is a giving of Christ, you see; we are the gift of the Father to Christ, so he is the gift of the Father to us. Now in the giving of Christ there is to be considered, first, the gift of his person; secondly, the gift of all the fruits that redound from the participating of his

person. First, God gives the person of Christ to men; as much as to say, God gives him to stand in the room of men, and men stand in his room. So that in the giving of Christ, God is pleased, as it were, to make a change, Christ represents our persons to the Father; we represent the person of Christ to him; all the loveliness the person of Christ hath, that is put upon us; and we are lovely with the Father, even as the Son himself. {Jn.17:23}[57] On the other part, all that hatefulness and loathsomeness in our nature is put upon Christ; he stands, as it were, the abhorred of the Father for the time, even the forsaken of the Father, as he represented our persons, bare our blame, sustained our wrath, and drank the dregs of our cup.[58] Here is the gift of the person; that which is Christ's is ours; that which is ours is his. There is an admirable expression, in II Cor.5:21; "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It is plainly manifested, that which we were, Christ became "sin for us;" then that which Christ was, we became, that is, "the righteousness of God;" for we are made the righteousness of God in him.

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57 This change of persons is condemned as an error by D. W. in his Gospel Truth, &c. pgs. 37, 38, but is a most glorious truth of the Gospel; and without which, it would be no Gospel, no glad tidings. It is fully expressed in II Cor.5:21, as well as in other places, and is the ground of our redemption by Christ, of his satisfaction for us, and the atonement of our sins, and the justification of our persons, and indeed of our whole salvation; so that we have reason to break out in the same exclamation as Justin Martyr did upon it, in his Epistle to Diognetus, pg. 500, "O sweet change! A work unsearchable! Benefits unexpected! That the transgression of many should be hid by one righteous person, and the righteousness of one justify many transgressors." Gill.

58 That is, while he bore the sins of his people, sustained the wrath of God, and was made a curse for them; nor should this seem harsh to any, especially as the Doctor has qualified it; for he does not say he stands the abhorred, but, as it were, the abhorred of the Father; though, had he said he was abhorred for a time, it is no more than the scripture says; "thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed;" {Ps.89:38;} or with thy Messiah; which words are understood of Christ, by several interpreters, ancient and modern; Christ indeed, as the Son of God was always the object of his Father's love; and so he was in his state of humiliation, and even under his sufferings and death; {Jn.10:17;} as the celebrated Witsius observes, "Christ was represented not only under the emblem of a lamb, a foolish beast, and prone to go astray; but of a goat, lascivious, wanton, and of an ill smell; yea, of a cursed serpent, and on that account execrable and cursed of God; not for the taking of our sins upon him, which was an holy action, and most grateful to God; but for the sins which he took upon him, and for the persons of the sinners which he sustained." Gill.

Secondly, with Christ there is the gift of the fruit of him; she that hath an husband, hath all that is his. I have read an ancient deed of gift, made by one of the first kings of England, giving all from the heavens to the center of the earth; so that if there be minerals in the bowels of the earth, they are comprehended in the gift; so it is with Christ; God, in his Son, and with him, giveth all that he hath and is. All the mines in the bowels of Christ are ours; "all things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;" so that, whatever is Christ's, by the gift of him, becomes the person's to whom he is given. Consider what you can imagine Christ hath as a fruit growing from him as he is Christ, with him that fruit is given to man, namely, to his own people; as free justification from all sin; free reconciliation, with the Father; free adoption to all the glory and liberty of the sons of

God; firm peace and agreement, without any more quarrelling between God and his people; a free use of all things in a sanctified way. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." {Rom.8:32}

Finally, {we cannot run upon these particulars at large,} the third thing given of God, is the Spirit of God. He will give his Spirit to them that ask him. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" {Lk.11:18} There is a deed of gift of the Spirit. "I will send you another Comforter," saith Christ, "and he shall lead you into all truth." And as the Spirit of God is the gift of God, so the knowledge of those free gifts that are only known by the Spirit itself is the gift of God. With this Spirit, wisdom and understanding are given, and the knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel; that you shall not only have these things {spoken of before} given you, but the knowledge of them all; for the sound knowledge of them is as much the gift of God as the things themselves; this is by the Spirit of God. Comfort is given by him; you shall never have rest in your spirits, but as he rocks you asleep, and gives you rest. In brief, as all things are given in Christ by his own purchase, so all things are given in him by the Spirit, by way of application and

possession in particular.[59]

Let us, therefore, now consider {for I must now redeem the time} what it is for these {I might have mentioned other particulars that are given} to be given of God. A deed of gift is opposed to two things; first, to sale; secondly, to loan. These things therefore are communicated by God. First, not by sale or bargain; for he doth not play the merchant; here are my wares, give me the price, and take the commodity. I beseech you take heed of such principles as these are; the covenant of Christ, as some may imagine, runs upon this strain, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" that is, I will tell you upon what terms I will be yours; come, bring this price, deliver up yourselves to me, and then I will be yours; give me the price and take it; God is no such huckster; he drives no such bargains in giving himself, and in giving Christ, and his Spirit; he makes no sale at all, for sale and deed of gift are opposite. If I buy such a thing of a man, he doth not give it me. Beloved, you must not think to bring a price to God for those things you would have of him; take heed of such conceits, that your assurance, peace, and comfort must cost you dear before you have them; for God will take no cost or price at your hands. Observe that admirable expression in Isaiah 55:1-3, for by this you shall plainly perceive that God is no huckster, he doth not keep shop, he doth not show you wares, and ask a price of you before you have them. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, {that is, that have a mind,} come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Why money and price? There is a difference between money and price, namely, as there

59 Our English divines, for I don't remember to have met with it among others, especially of the last age, and many in this, have used the word purchase, concerning the blessings of grace and glory, and other things. They indeed, come to us through the blood of the covenant, that so we may enjoy them consistent with the holiness and righteousness of God; but, strictly and properly speaking, nothing was purchased by Christ but his church; nor is any other in scripture ever said to be so; the only passage that looks like it, {Eph.1:14,} respects the people of God, the portion and possession of Christ, purchased and redeemed by him; the reason of which is, the people of God, though given to Christ, were captives in other hands, and therefore must be redeemed or brought out; whereas, the blessings of grace and glory never were. It would be better, I think, if the word was disused. Gill.

is a difference between money and monies-worth; your poor men, their days labour is monies-worth, and their days labour is a price; therefore, there is equality between the labour and the wages, as there is equivalence between the money and the thing bought. Now the meaning of the Holy Ghost here is that God doth not look for money, nor price, nor labour; he doth not look that men should earn their gifts before they have them; he looks not for the penny, nor for the penny's-worth; therefore, be not deceived, though in respect of Christ, God made a sale, and made him pay according to the bargain; in which regard, the Apostle saith that "we are bought with a price;" yet, in respect of us, I say, there is no sale at all. Let me tell you, there are far more Simon Magus like persons in the world than men are aware of. In Acts 8 the great sin of Simon Magus was that he thought the gift of the Holy Ghost might be bought with money; the Apostle in that chapter thunders out an execration upon him, for offering to think or speak this, and therefore he tells him plainly, "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," and that he had no part nor portion in the matter. How near they follow to the heels and steps of Simon Magus that will bring their price in their hands to God, to partake of the gift of the Holy Ghost, I leave it to the wise to judge. Therefore, you that would have your part and portion in this matter, of the gift of God, know that it must cost you nothing; this derogateth not from your obedience; there is employment enough for you, and there are ends sufficient for it, though this obedience be not the price you are to bring, from whence you are to expect the gifts of God; God requires your obedience to glorify him; to be the manifestation of your thankfulness; for the good of your brethren; for the manifesting and accomplishing his gifts in the use of ordinances but that these should be a price is a gross mistake. Do not dream that your conscionable walking before God here is the thing that must commend you to him hereafter; nothing but Jesus Christ sent out of the love and bowels of the Father can possibly commend you to God. Do not think this, or that, you do, is that price from whence you are to expect the things of God, but know that these are given of him. I shall run

over some heads very briefly, for I see I am much prevented.

Secondly, therefore besides sale, God's gifts are not a loan neither; this is a great consideration. The things that we have of God, as they are a gift, so they are not a loan; what we receive of him, are not lent. There is a difference between lending and giving; he that lends money, looks that it should be paid again; he that gives it, gives it forever without ever looking for it again. The things of God, as they are given, so he doth not look for them again. You know, it is a ridiculous thing to give a thing, and take it again. We count this children's play; but how many of God's children, in temptation, look upon the things that God hath given them, and yet suspect he will take them again? What is lent, men may challenge again; but, when a man gives a thing, it is injustice for him to challenge it anymore; there is the difference between lending and giving. If God gives things to men, and takes them again, he relinquisheth and frustrateth his own act; for if he takes them away, they were not given. A deed of gift and title of land by deed of gift are as firm as a title by purchase; what God hath given, he cannot call in again. I speak this to the consolation of trembling spirits; they look upon God bestowing himself, Christ, and his Spirit, and they receive what God hath given; yet their spirits tremble, and they are afraid he will take these away again from them; they commit such and such sins; therefore, surely, say they; I shall lose that I have. Remember the nature of a gift, and remember this too, that whatever God hath given, he calls it not in again. Suppose a father should deliver up and give all his lands and goods to his son, and make a real deed of gift in Law, passing it over to him, as firm as Law can make; and this son, peradventure, commits some fault afterwards; can the Father call in this deed of gift, in respect of the fault committed? Thou art a son of God, and a darling of his; it may be thou hast committed many sins; for "in many things we sin all;" doth God call in his deed? Is not this deed of gift enrolled in the word of grace, and upon record? This very enrolling is sufficient security to thee; thou canst not be dispossest of it.

There are many that think that such preaching gives way

to licentiousness; I answered it fully the last time I was among you. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." {Rom.12:1} The consideration of the unchangeableness of the grace of God and his love; there is no other means in the world to keep men from sin, but this stands firm forever. As things are the gift of God, so they are unchangeable to them, to whom they are given; and the Lord give you wisdom, understanding, and his Spirit, to hold fast a truth of such infinite concern to the joy and peace of your spirits; and till you receive such unchangeable principles, whereupon the stability of your peace is founded, you will be like waves of the sea tossed to and fro with every wind of temptation; you will have every little thing raise suspicions and jealousies in your spirits. But, beloved, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" {Num.23:19} Shall God assent to a thing, and how much more shall not he make good that word that he assents to? Certainly, when men give a thing, they will not take it away, seeing the thing is given; I say, the things of God are given, and he cannot take them away; the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. There are many things of useful consideration, if time would give me leave to open them to you.

Thirdly, the things of God are not only given, but they are freely given. I must not touch upon the heads; there are these five things considerable in a free gift; I will but name them.

First, a free gift is, when a thing is given without compulsion; a man doth not properly give his purse upon the highway, when thieves force him to it; things freely given are not compulsory, but voluntary.

Secondly, things may be given, but grudgingly; they may be given with a heart reluctant against it; as many men give to the poor, to serve the necessity of the times; but it goes to their hearts to part with it; here is a gift, but it is not a free gift, because the heart is not enlarged, here is not a ready heart; but God doth not

give grudgingly, he loves a cheerful giver, and doth so himself, for the Lord waits that he may be gracious. “Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you.” {Isa.30:18}

Thirdly, a gift is free, and free indeed, when a thing is given only out of the motion in, and from a man’s own spirit, without any external incentive and provocation to put him upon such a gift. It is commendable, I confess, for a man to be persuaded by others to do good, but the glory of free gifts stands in the freeness of a man’s own spirit without provocation. Know thus much in general, all the things we receive from God, there is no incentive, no provocation, no motive, as the original, to stir or provoke him to give them.

Let me tell you this, Christ himself is not the original motive of the gift of God; he is the instrument, or, as the scripture saith, the Mediator of our partaking of the gifts of God; the love of God in himself is the first fountain of all the gifts of God to us; nay, the very fountain of Christ himself, to compass the fruition and enjoyment of gifts, that the love of God himself had first framed, composed, and ordained for us; much less then, can any creature in the world have prevalency with God to stir up affections in him, as if he needed to be stirred up to do the good he doth; that which he doth, cometh from the motion of his own thoughts rising in himself, not being raised up by anything without himself.

Fourthly, a gift is free, when it is bountiful; such a man is free house-keeper; that is, he keeps a bountiful house; so the gifts of God are free in respect of his bounty; God doth not sow sparingly, but liberally; he giveth us freely to enjoy all things. There is plenteous redemption with him. “Let Israel hope in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.” {Ps.130:7} There is abundance of satisfaction. “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” {Ps.36:8} Here is a free God; here is freeness indeed, in that he is a bountiful God, in all that he bestows upon the sons of men; he fills the cup to the brim, pressed down, heaped up, and running

over; in this manner is the bounty of God expressed. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." {Heb.7:25} "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." {Eph.3:20,21}

Fifthly and lastly, a free gift is a gift that is unconditional. God doth not propose conditions beforehand, but gives his gifts without respect to any condition. Beloved, do not mistake; our faith and obedience are not the condition of God's gifts. That in the song of Zachariah is observable, "that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." {Lk.1:74,75} Observe, this service "without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives," is not the condition of deliverance, that we might partake of it; but here is first deliverance, and then service is the fruit of it; not deliverance the fruit of service; God delivers, and then we serve; and the tenor of the Gospel in this, is contrary to the tenor of the Law; the tenor of the Law runs thus, first do, then live; the Gospel saith, first live, then do. "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." {Ez.16:6} "Then {vs.9} washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil, &c." Thus, when you consider, the frame of the Gospel runs, that there is nothing comes to men, but as a free gift of God, even Christ himself is so given; do not think that God gives Christ upon condition.

Fourthly, what it is for men to know this gift of God; there is a two-fold knowledge. In general, there is a knowledge of the thing; and secondly, a knowledge of propriety in the thing; so there is a two-fold knowledge of these things given; and the knowledge of the thing itself given is two-fold; first, it is intellectual; and secondly, practical. The intellectual knowledge is the natural understanding of the thing in a proper sense; practical knowledge

is a sensible knowledge. You may distinguish them thus, as the knowledge man has of the sweetness of sugar in his understanding, and the knowledge of the sweetness of it in the taste. There is a great deal of difference between these two; for the things of God that are given, may be known intellectually in a common way, not only by the elect, but reprobate; but the people of God only know them practically, that is, they receive by degrees the sweetness of them, and God gives the taste of them more and more to them.

Secondly, there is beside the knowledge of the thing, the knowledge of propriety, which is this, when men know the things of God, and know them as their own. It is one thing for a person to know such a woman is wise, beautiful, and rich; and it is another thing to know this wise, beautiful, and rich woman is my wife; that I have a propriety in all she is, and hath; and so, likewise, it is one thing for a woman to know that a man is a man of parts, of wealth, and honour; to know him that he is so, is one thing, and to know him that is thus wise, rich, and honorable, to be her husband, is another thing; so it is likewise in the knowledge of spiritual things; it is one thing to know God and spiritual things, another thing to know him by way of propriety, to know that he gives himself to me as mine; and so, likewise, of all the rest of the particulars that are given; as Christ and the Spirit; now all this comes not by the spirit of the world, but by the Spirit that is of God. This I should have showed more at large; but of this hereafter; because I fear I have already trespassed upon your patience.

SERMON XIII
RECONCILIATION BY CHRIST ALONE

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." {II Cor.5:19}

This great Apostle of the Gentiles, Saint Paul I mean, though he did not first break the ice, nor lay the first hand upon the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles, to pull it down, that they might become both one in one Christ; {for Peter went before

him, and was indeed the first in this business, though with great bitterness of spirit even from the rest of the Apostles themselves; who supposed that the glorious privileges of Christ were to be confined only to the nation of the Jews, as you may perceive in Acts, chapter 8 & 9; though Paul I say, was not the first;} yet, as he himself speaks in this business of publishing the grace of God in Christ to the Gentiles, he labored more abundantly than they all; of which labour of his, this chapter gives abundant testimony, especially in the beginning of verse 14, where he gives the great occasion, or motive, why he did preach Christ so clearly and freely to the Gentiles; "for the love of Christ," {saith he,} constrains me; as if he should say, seeing that the glory of the grace of God hath so far extended itself, as that not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles, may have a portion in him, it is a pity that so much abundant grace which serves to the magnifying of Christ so exceedingly should be concealed; Christ hath done so much for me, thinks Paul, that it were an unworthy part in me to conceal that which should make so much unto his glory; the love wherewith he hath loved me, constrains me to do the utmost {that he might have all his praise} to manifest his glory.

Therefore having thus laid down the great motive that set him on work to publish the Gospel, he takes up this resolution to do it, let it cost him what it will; {as it is like to do all that will be so exact in publishing the Gospel as he was;} yet the love of Christ did so constrain him, that he cannot keep it in; he must speak out this love of his. Thus he comes to the business in the latter end of verse 14, "if one {that is, Christ} died for all, then were all dead."[60] The Apostle's meaning is this, he puts the emphasis upon the word "all;" and that emphasis is not spoken simply, but relatively and comparatively; as much as to say, it is not only the Jews that have part in the death of Christ, but all have a part in it. If Christ had an eye not only on the Jews, but on

60 The sense of the passage is not that Christ died for all that were dead, but that all were dead for whom he died; and the meaning is, that if Christ died for all, then all those were dead for whom he died. Wherefore this text does not make for the doctrine of general redemption; for it should be observed, that it does not say that Christ died for all men, but for all; and so, agreeable to the Scriptures, may be understood of all the persons mentioned. Gill.

the Gentiles too, in his death; then, saith he, "all were dead," that is, all his people have a part in that death. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." {Rev.5:9}

Now, that the Apostle here mainly intends the setting forth of the largeness of God's grace in Christ, extending not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, verse 16, makes clear; for, saith he there, "henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Give me leave to open the meaning of it; for I must tell you there is a great deal of mistake concerning the scope of the Apostle in these words, which makes the sense of them so obscure in the reading of them. The Apostle was once of the same mind with James, and the rest; that Christ, as he came of the flesh of Abraham, and so, according to the flesh, was of the kindred of all the Jews; they verily thought that the virtue of Christ, and redemption by him, had extended no further than to the flesh, that is, to the same flesh of which he came; they of the circumcision chide Peter, that he should offer to go outside the bounds of the Jews, to preach the Gospel to them, which they thought had no part in it; the Apostle was of this mind once; but "henceforth {saith he} know I no man after the flesh;" that is, I will never preach Christ after the flesh, as if none had share in him but those that are of the kindred of which he came; nay, saith he, "though I have known Christ thus after the flesh, henceforth I know him so no more;" where he expounds what he spoke before; as if he should say, I thought that Christ had a mind to save none but the kindred of which he came; I will know him thus no longer; I will preach the Gospel so no more; I will preach it no more to the Jews than to the Gentiles; they that are not of the flesh of Christ, have as great a portion in him as those that are of his flesh.

Hence he begins to gather up his main doctrine which he would preach to the Gentiles, and that he brings in verse 17, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" where the

emphasis lies upon "any man;" "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" as if he should say, this is the new doctrine I will now preach to the world; not if the Jew be in Christ; but if any man in the world be in him, he is a new creature; every man in the world hath this privilege, as well as the Jews; if any man be in Christ, he shall be a new creature, as well as the Jews; and because of some obscurity in this phrase, therefore, in verse 18, the Apostle expounds his own meaning, what he intends by a new creature. Give me leave to open this place to you; for I must tell you there are some great mistakes in this point. Most men think that this phrase, new creature, is a renewed, sanctified man, so as he becomes new in his own conversation, when his life is changed; I do not deny the truth of the thing, all that are in Christ, he renews them, sanctifies them, and subdues iniquity in them; but, under favour, let me tell you, the Apostle's meaning here by new creature is not that they are sanctified; but that they are new creatures; that is, they are reconciled unto God; this is his meaning; "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" that is, he is brought into a new condition that he was not in before; and this new condition is that he is now reconciled unto God; whereas, before, he was an alien and stranger to him.

But, you will say, how will it appear that the Apostle's new creature is a person reconciled, and considered as reconciled, and not as sanctified?

I answer, this is clear by verse 18, "for all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Mark well, the main thing he drives at here is, to let the Corinthians know, and us with them, what the main ministry was which Christ had committed unto them; which was this, to publish, that "God, from whom all things are, hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" that this was the ministry which was committed unto them.

Now, if the Apostle had spoken here of sanctification, he would have said, that the ministry committed unto him, with the rest, was a ministry of sanctification, as well as reconciliation;

but the ministry God committed to him here was this, God reconciling men to himself by Jesus Christ; so that the being a new creature here, which was the ministry committed to the Apostle, is reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ. Now in verse 19, the text that I have read unto you, he begins anew to explain more particularly, what this ministry is that the Lord hath committed unto him. "To wit, {saith he,} that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." And therefore, in the next verse you shall find that he makes this so essential a business to the ministry of the Gospel, that he calls himself, and the rest, ambassadors, and ambassadors for this very purpose, namely, in Christ's stead, to beseech people that they would be reconciled unto God; and then, in the closure of the chapter, he tells them what the fruits of this reconciliation are, and by what means we come to partake of it. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." From which words I might observe to you, as they have reference to the coherence.

First, what the great and main business of us that profess ourselves to be the ministers of Christ, ought to be in the world with men. It is to be lamented, I confess, and I would to God there were no occasion to speak of it, whilst we profess ourselves to be the ambassadors of Christ, to dispatch this great business, to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God; we are too much the ministers of Moses, pressing and thundering the wrath of God from heaven; publishing unto men the working out their own salvation by their own works, according to the law; putting on them the performance of duties in every particular, that they may have peace and joy of spirit from it; telling them, that they must make their peace with God, by fasting, and prayer, and mourning. Is this to beseech men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God by Christ alone? This is the message of the ministers of the Gospel; and whoever he be that forsakes this message, he goes, and is not sent; he takes upon him to manage a business out of his commission; for the commission is, that we in Christ's

stead should beseech men to be reconciled unto God, and that by the blood of Christ alone.

Secondly, I might note a thing, which, peradventure, puzzles the heads of many people, how you may understand those many texts of Scripture that speak so largely of the extent of the death of Christ, "he died not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world;" and so, verse 14, "if one died for all then were all dead." From whence many collect the universality of redemption unto all particular persons in the world; but from this coherence you may plainly perceive, that the Apostle's main drift is not that every particular person partakes of reconciliation by Christ; he doth not speak of every particular, but in opposition to the Jews; as if he should say, you mistake yourselves, you that are of the Jews, that boast of Christ, as if there were no Christ but in yourselves; no, saith he, you are mistaken, he goes beyond you, he goes over all the world.[61] And when For the clearing

61 The learned Hoornbeeck asserts that the Doctor from this passage, and I John 2:2, after quoted, "collects the universality of the redemption of all particular persons in the world, though John saith, {I Jn.2:2,} "and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;" he doth not say ours, in reference to believers, but he saith ours, as he was naturally of the stock of Abraham; when he saith, "not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world," he doth not oppose the world unto the elect, but the world of the elect unto the Jews; and his meaning is, all the world hath a part in Christ, and in every corner of it there is a portion of Christ, as well as there is in us, who are of the seed of Abraham; and, therefore, the Apostle saith expressly that "the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith;" {Rom.4:13;} that is, not made to Abraham and to his seed after the flesh, but to his seed after the Spirit; that is, those that walk in the steps of the faith of Abraham. By this you may be able to resolve those manifold difficulties that arise from the universality of the tender of grace by Christ unto the world; the world, I say, is opposed only unto the narrow confines of the Jews, and includes not particular persons; but this is not that I mainly drive at for the present. I come to the text itself. The substance of the main ministry of the Apostle stands in this, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In which you may observe with me.

First, the great grace, that living, lively, and heart-reviving grace the Apostle brings to light, and commends to the comforting of the hearts of God's people, and that is reconciliation with God. Secondly, note here, the original author or efficient of this reconciliation and grace, that is, God himself. Thirdly, note also, the main means by which this reconciliation is effected, and that is Christ himself alone; "God was in Christ." Fourthly, note this, the time when this reconciliation was made between God and persons in particular. The Apostle himself, though he lived so many years before us, speaks of it as a thing already past; he doth not say that God is, or will be, but he

of this, first note, something is to be premised as a necessary antecedent to reconciliation itself. Unto reconciliation, of necessity there must be supposed something to be done by us, occasioning a breach between God and us; administering such just cause of distaste, and of offence, as not only caused God to separate himself afar off from men, but also to prepare wrath and vengeance. Wherever there is reconciliation, it is supposed there was a breach made; and, upon the breach made, reconciliation is the bringing persons, thus at distance and difference by a breach, to become one again; and, therefore, you must know, there is no man under heaven reconciled unto God, but as he is, or was considered as walking contrary unto God; and that this contrary walking unto him hath occasioned a breach between God and him. And, therefore, you shall find, when the Apostle speaks of our being reconciled unto God, he brings still in this clause, that there were estrangement and distance, before such union and reconciliation; as in Eph.2:13, where you shall find how he brings in the previous consideration; "but now in Christ Jesus ye who

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speaks in the past-perfect tense that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" it is a thing long before finished perfectly to our hands; that we may, when God hath given us eyes to behold it, see it as a thing already done, and perfected before, and not now perfecting, much less now to be begun. Fifthly, we may note the persons with whom God in Christ is reconciled, and that is the world. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

The principal thing I mean to drive at is the consideration of the great grace that the Apostle brings hereto light; and that is, reconciliation with God; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." What is it {will you say} for God to be reconciled to persons? all are not partakers of that reconciliation;" in which this learned man appears to be mistaken; for the Doctor does not collect this himself, but only says, "many collect it from hence;" and he himself seems to be of a different mind by the adversative 'but' from this coherence, &c., and expressly says, the Apostle does not speak of every particular person, but in opposition to the Jews; and so, on the other text, I John 2:2, he observes, that the Apostle does not oppose the world unto the elect, but the world of the elect to the Jews; and suggests that there are some in all the world, and in every corner of it, that have a part in Christ, and are his portion; which is very far from the doctrine of general redemption; and though the Doctor sometimes uses some general phrases, when off his guard, yet I cannot think he held the doctrine of universal redemption; and this learned Professor himself, who is the only one I ever met with that charged the Doctor with it, seems to have some hesitation himself about it; for he says, {of the Doctor and those in his time called Antinomians,} "they teach some sort of universal redemption, or universal redemption in some sense." Gill.

sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." This making nigh, or bringing together, is the reconciliation that is made with God; and the persons that are thus made nigh, before their bringing nigh, are said to be afar off; as much as to say, there is that contrariety between God and man naturally, that puts him afar off from God, and makes him remote. The Lord beholds the wicked afar off, saith the Psalmist, "though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off." {Ps.138:6} God keeps at a distance with men, when they walk in a way giving distaste and offence unto him; and it is the business of Christ to bring them nigh again, those that were thus sometimes afar off. But the Apostle speaks more plainly in Col.1:21; "you, {saith he,} that were sometime alienated {or estranged, that is to say, from God} and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." Here he not only shows that there is a remote distance, and a kind of estrangement between God and men, before reconciliation; but he delivers the true proper ground from whence this alienation proceeds; "who were alienated in your minds by reason of your wicked works;" our wicked works are they that cause alienation and estrangement from God; "and you, that were sometime alienated," are now reconciled by Christ; "in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight." And, therefore know, this must be laid down as a certain position, and be received of men, that in respect of themselves they are alienated and estranged persons, and the wickedness of their ways is that which causeth this alienation, and estrangement and separation from God.

But some {it may be} will object; was there ever a time that God was alienated and estranged as an enemy to those people of his, with whom he is now reconciled? Some will say, God loves his people with an everlasting love, and he never looks upon his people but with a look of love, and with a look of union.

For answer to this, give me leave to clear a mystery unto you; this seems to be a kind of paradox, that God should, from all eternity, look with eyes of love upon his people, and yet there

should be a time in which there should be an alienation or enmity between God and them. For the reconciliation of this difference, you must know, it is one thing for God to recollect all future things that shall come in all the several times of the world, into one thought of his own; and it is another thing for these things to come to pass in their several times, according to their own nature. You must know, it is true, that in God's eternal thoughts, according to the infinite vastness of his own comprehension, he did sum up, from first to last, all the occurrences and passages which in succession of time should come to pass. As for example; he had at once in his eye man in his innocency, in his fall, and in his restoration by Christ; he had in his eye man committing sin against him from time to time; and, at the same instant, had in his eye Christ dying for these sins of men, and so satisfying his own justice for their transgressions. Now, because God had all things at once in his eye, which, in respect of their actual being, are in succession of time; therefore, it comes to pass, that God, from all eternity, had everlasting love unto his own people, though in time they do those actions which, in their own nature, are enmity against God. For example; you and I are, it may be, this moment committing some sin, which is enmity to the nature of God; that sin, simply considered in its own nature, hath an estrangement in it, to separate between us and God; but though it is true, that sin committed hath, in its own nature, a power of separating; yet, as God from all eternity had the present sins we now commit, in his eye, and at the same moment had the satisfaction in his eye; from hence it comes to pass, there was not a time in which God actually stood at enmity with our persons; but, in respect of the nature of things coming successively to pass, man's condition may be considered as a condition of enmity; and again, it may be considered as a condition of reconciliation to God. That you and I were born in sin is true, and that this our being born in sin was a state of enmity against God, is as true; that in the fulness of time Christ came into the world, and then actually did bear our sins, by which God became reconciled unto us again, is also most certainly true. There is a great distance of time between sin committed, and

that satisfaction actually made; but in respect of God's eye looking upon all things at once, there is no distance of time between that enmity which sin did produce, and that reconciliation which the blood of Christ hath wrought, to take away this enmity. I hope, though this be a high mystery, yet it will be clear to such that will but take into consideration that difference between God's own simple act of comprising all the sins of the world at once, {I mean that infinite act of God in that infinite comprehension of his,} and the succession of things in their own time and nature; this being supposed, that persons actually do that which is enmity, and that which makes a difference and separation.

Reconciliation itself briefly stands in this, namely, that whatever breach there was, or was occasioned by any act of man in it, all these breaches are quite made up, and taken away; when God is reconciled to persons, he hath no more quarrel with, nor controversy against them with whom he is reconciled; though this day, yesterday, tomorrow, and the next day, thou dost commit a sin, which, in its own nature, is enmity, and may occasion a breach between God and thee; yet, I say, if God be once reconciled, all whatever administers any quarrel or controversy between God and thee, is absolutely taken up; he hath no more to object against thee, or to hit thee in the teeth withal. Understand, I beseech you, the nature of reconciliation, and you shall find there is more in it than usually is apprehended. You know as long as men stomach one another, and, as often as they have occasion, are quarrelling one with another; all this while these persons are not reconciled indeed, though peradventure there may be some complimental shaking of hands; if still there be snarling one at another, and stomaching one another, they are not reconciled; so I say, is God quarrelling with thy spirit? Is he still hitting thee in the teeth with such and such sins that thou committest against him? Is the bitterness of God poured upon thee? Is his wrath revealed against thee? I say, if there be this wrath of God at any time truly revealed against thee, there is not yet a reconciliation of God towards thee. In reconciliation there are no old grudgings, quarrellings and controversies; there is no hearing of them anymore; in that

there are forging and forgetting, as you use to say; and all this, whatever it is with men, it is thus with God; wherever God is reconciled, he forgives and forgets forever.

Therefore you shall find when the Lord speaks of reconciliation in the covenant, he saith, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people;" here is the drawing and making a person one with himself; "and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," follows it. I beseech you, observe it well, there is a great deal of matter in this expression, and this will give you rest if ever you have it. Either you must deny God is reconciled, or you must conclude he hath forgiven your transgressions, and he will remember your sins no more.

It may be you feel much corruption venting itself; though you act this and that transgression at this time, if God be reconciled to you, he doth not remember your sins you now commit. "Your sins," mark it well, because I know it is harsh to men, and contrary to sense and reason, yet it must be true, because the Lord hath spoken it; "your sins, and your iniquities, I will remember no more." You will say, when? I answer, when God is entered into covenant with a people; "and this shall be the covenant I will make in those days," saith the Lord, "I will sprinkle you with clean water, and your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." {Ez.36:25, Heb.10:16,17}

How can this be, you will say, is God grown so forgetful, that he takes no notice, that at this instant I sin, and cannot he remember I sin? This seems to be a mighty strange argument.

Now suppose I could not answer this; is this a truth that God saith, or no, "your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more?" If this be not a truth, then the word of God is untrue, and then farewell all the ground upon which a person ought to build; but let God be true, and every man a liar; therefore, to clear it, I say, God remembers, and knows well enough that we act this; his meaning then is, I will remember them no more, to hit you in the teeth with them; I will have no more to say to you for these transgressions you now commit; for all that he has to say against iniquity, against this present iniquity committed; he hath said it

over to Christ already, when he was upon the cross; and this sin now committed was then in the remembrance of God; he took the full payment for it, and for that sin that shall be committed tomorrow, unto the end of the world, he took all the payment of Christ; therefore he will never repeat them over to you; this is God's way, not to hit his people in covenant in the teeth, nor upbraid them with any sin they commit; this is plain in the latter end of the text, "not imputing their trespasses unto them;" as if he had said, I will never call you to an account for the sins you commit; I will never tax you for them; you shall be in mine eyes as if you did not sin; all that I mean to ask, I have it already, at the hands of my Son. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" {Is.53:11;} with the beholding of it. In Isa.27:4, you have a notable expression, "fury is not in me," saith God. You will say, how can that be; is not God angry? Doth he not pour out his wrath and vengeance? Doth not his fury burn against sin? The prophet speaks in the name of God in that place; "fury is not in me;" but if you will read the passage well, observe it, and you shall find of what time the Lord speaks this; he speaks not of the present, but of a certain time that he prophesies of. The Lord hath a vineyard, he watches over it, and waters it night and day; and this vineyard shall enlarge its borders, and shall spread itself over all the world; the meaning then is this; there is a time to come, wherein the people of the Lord, the vine of the Lord shall spread itself, not in the garden of Israel only, but all the world over; that is, the Gentiles shall be received into fellowship with God, as well as the Jews; Christ shall come, and pull down the wall of partition; and the Gospel of Christ shall be preached all the world over; then "fury shall not be in me;" when Christ hath offered up himself, and perfected forever them that are sanctified, then the Lord hath no more fury to pour out upon such as are in him; when your reconciliation is made with God; know from the first time of it till your last breath, there shall not be the least fury in God to you; for that is poured out upon Christ already, and there is not one drop of that poison to be poured out upon you. Isa.54:9, is a most admirable place; "as I have sworn {saith the Lord} that the

waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." What; God not be wroth with, nor so much as rebuke persons? Yea, so saith the Lord, "I will not be wroth," for I have sworn unto thee, that as the waters of Noah, &c. You know the Lord made a covenant, that there should never come a flood to drown the world anymore; this covenant is firm, so as that the water shall drown all the world again before God will be wroth with his people anymore; when is this? Look into the beginning of the chapter, and you shall see; when the Jews shall inherit the Gentiles, then it shall be.

But you will say, the Lord in that chapter saith, "in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; and therefore it seems God was wroth and angry then, when he said he would not be wroth, and with the same people.

But mark it well, there is a great mistake, as if the Lord spake all in that chapter to the same people; he distinguisheth between his present dealing with them, and with his people afterwards, when the Gentiles shall come into his fold; indeed it is true, he saith, he forsook this church as the wife of his youth, "but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer;" there was a time in which the Lord was wroth and hid his face; but there is a time when he will not only be kind, but will have mercy with everlasting kindness; that is, a kindness that hath no intervenings of wrath mixed, but that holds out, an everlasting love; and this mercy without any wrath between, should be when the people of the Jews should inherit the Gentiles; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, by Christ's taking away the wall of partition.

In brief, know this as a certain truth, God once reconciled is so forever; God is not such a changeling as to be reconciled today, and fall out tomorrow again; God when he is once become friends with a man, he is so forever; nothing shall break squares between God and him. {Rom.8:38,39}

Again, consider by what means this reconciliation is wrought, and then it will be manifest unto you that God cannot be angry, for it is by Christ; "God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself." I ask this question, did Christ fully satisfy the indignation of God, or did he satisfy it only in part, leaving some remainders of it for the creature to come after and bear? If Christ did not fully satisfy indignation, he is but a piece of a Saviour; he did not save to the uttermost; he should be no perfect Saviour, if he did not satisfy the wrath of God to the uttermost; but if he did fully satisfy, as God himself "beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied;" then all indignation is past. Look as it is with men that are to make accounts; suppose a man should account for a hundred several sums, these accounts are not satisfied, except he satisfy and pay every sum; if he pay ninety-nine sums, and leaves but one unpaid, the creditor is not satisfied. Either Christ hath paid all, or some must come after to pay the rest; certainly indignation never ceases till there be complete satisfaction. Either God hath satisfaction perfectly in Christ, or a believer must pay the remainder; either he hath the full of Christ, or a believer himself must satisfy. Suppose that Christ had satisfied God's indignation for all sins but one, and a believer must satisfy that one; that one is enough to damn him forever; for he cannot give satisfaction for one sin.

If Christ had satisfied for all, and had taken away the whole indignation, how can God come and pour out new indignation? And {to conclude} know this, that this perfect reconciliation, this peace with God, is not a thing now to be agitated, and controverted in heaven; as if there were an act of parliament now in hand, in hope it will pass, which must have some fear with it, lest it should miscarry; but God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Let me tell you, whoever you are that can claim a part in Christ, your reconciliation is finished to your hands; Christ is now making reconciliation in heaven for you; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;" he is not now reconciling; the thing is finished; your reconciliation is complete. God hath past it not only by vote and consent in heaven, but he hath past it upon record under his hand, in the ministry of the Gospel; we hold out to you reconciliation accomplished; we do not hold it forth as doing, or to be done with him; but it is done with him; if you do

but close with it, the thing is finished for you.

Xiv Christ's Free Welcome To All Comers

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." {Jn.6:37}

These are the words of our Saviour; the occasion was this, he having not only a natural sympathy and compassion, but also being a spiritual physician, disperses abroad common mercies in an extraordinary manner. In the former chapter, he is plentiful in healing the sick, and curing many diseases; natural men, being sensible of such kindnesses, flocked mightily after him. And though Christ knew well enough what they were, as you shall see by and by, yet he shuts not the bowels of compassion from them in extremity; there were many ready to faint; now, rather than they should want supply, he would work another miracle, and, with a few loaves and fishes, satisfy thousands of them, and so he doth. This people finding good cheer, they are like dogs, can scarce leave the house; bear with the expression, for they were no better, for all their flocking to Christ. I say, they were so eager to follow him, no ground should hold them. Christ takes ship, and goes over sea to Capernaum; no country is too cold for them; nay, the sea itself shall not part Christ and them; after him they will go.

Well, they come to him; and, because he had been so kind to feed them, they think they may be familiar with him; and, therefore, after their carnal fashion, begin to put questions unto him, I say, in a fleshly way; in a low fashion, they begin to argue with him, "how came he there?" Such poor silly stuff they object to him. Well, though Christ had natural compassion, yet he will not soothe them in their folly and simplicity, but deals roundly with them, and tells them plainly that they were mistaken in him, if they thought his excellency did stand in working miracles for food, for bread; he came on a higher errand, and a business of greater consequence; and, therefore, tells them plainly, it was another business he came about; their thoughts must rise higher than the loaves; "labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." He comes about eternal life, he

brings that which might produce that unto them, and therefore counsels them to look after it. Well, because they are in talk, they hold it on, though to little purpose, and put another question to Christ, "what shall we do that we may work the works of God?" Naturally, men are upon doing to get; when we talk upon matters of religion, it is doing gets everything; therefore, they will be doing, that they may have something; now, though Christ doth not answer the question they made, being a silly one, yet he gives them another answer that was to the purpose; "this is the work of God, to believe in him whom he hath sent." Never look to get it by doing; look to get it from him, and not from yourselves, and your own doings. {Jn.6:26-29}

When Christ had made that answer, they began to be a little angry with him, and to put a caviling question, or a question by way of exception against him; "what sign shewest thou {say they,} then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?" Moses gave us this bread from heaven; {speaking of manna.} What doth Christ tell them of life that he brings? What is he better than Moses? Will he give better bread than manna

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was? Well, {for all their heat, passion, and peevishness,} he will answer them again, "your fathers did eat manna and are dead;" here he takes them off from their great Rabbi, whom they mentioned as if he was their Christ; and also from their objection; saying, that the manna they did eat was but satisfactory for a time, there was not life in it; they that did eat it are dead; and, therefore, he comes to make application, and to show wherein he excelled Moses, and wherein that bread he brings exceeds manna, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst;" {vs.35;} they ate manna, and yet were empty for all that; they drank of the rock Moses smote, and yet they were athirst again; "but he that comes to me, shall not hunger;" for I have so much as shall satisfy, there shall be no lack at all.

After Christ had made this discourse, he begins to deal plainly with them indeed, and tells them that "though they had

seen, yet they believed not." It may be some discouragement to men, that labour in the vineyard of the Lord, to see small fruit of their labours; but here, you see, Christ himself took a great deal of pains with these men, and all to little purpose, or rather to no purpose at all; therefore, in verse 37, Christ comforts himself against that common discomfort which was though these men believe not, {"ye also have seen me, and believe not; vs.36;} yet, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" I shall have all that I expect; I never look for more than the Father gives me; and of those that he gives, I shall lose none; and then, afterwards, in the words of the text, he comforts those that do come; these, that would not come, he leaves, and falls to consolation for his people that do come; "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The doctrine the words afford, will be natural, it shall not vary a jot from the very words of the Holy Ghost; "he that comes to Christ, he will in no wise cast him out;" mark it well beloved, there is abundance of life in it, to those whose eyes the Lord will be pleased to open, to behold the fulness in it; I say, he that comes to Christ, it is no matter who nor what he be, there is nothing in the world can be considered as an hindrance to his coming; if he do but come, he may be certain of this, "he shall in no wise be cast out;" there is no man under heaven, be he as vile as can possibly be imagined, if he do but come to Christ, even while he is so, shall be rejected of him, or have a repulse. Beloved, I desire the doctrine itself may be printed and stamped in your spirits.

Give me leave to speak a few words in general, before I come to particulars. I know, I may speak that which will be offence to some, but I must speak the truth of the Lord, whatever men say. I say, whatever thou art in this congregation, suppose a drunkard, a whore-master, a swearer, a blasphemer and persecutor, a madman in iniquity, couldst thou but come to Jesus Christ; I say, come, only come, it is no matter though there be no alteration in the world in thee, in that instant when thou dost come; I say, at that instant, though thou be thus vile as can be imagined, come to Christ; he is untrue if he put thee out; "in no wise, {saith he} will I cast thee out."[62] And that I may the better come upon the spirits of such

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can observe, or take any encouragement from; nor any in his life and conversation observable to men; otherwise, there must be an alteration in him, or it is impossible for him to come to Christ, that is, believe in him; he must have grace given him to draw him, or he will never come, he cannot. [Jn.6:44-65] The desires of the soul must be towards Christ; there must be a sight of him, and of both the want and worth of him; but the sense is, that a man that has been ever so vile, even to the very instant. There are two sorts of people in the world that are given by the Father to Christ, who yet, for the present, do not actually come to him.

First, there are a sort of men in the world, elected indeed, but, for the present, are wild asses upon the mountains, snuffing up the wind, and as desperate in iniquity as the veriest reprobate under heaven; and yet there shall not be rejection of these persons when they come; I say, whenever they come, though as sinful as their skins can hold; yet when they come to Christ, they shall not be cast out; for the present indeed, they despise their birthright, they scorn the grace of God, and cast it at their heels.

But there are a second sort of people given by God to Christ that have not received him, and are not actually come to him; and yet for the present are wrought upon to be a willing people in some sort; that is, the Lord hath dealt thus far with them, fain they would close with Christ, fain they would conclude an interest and portion in him; Oh! it would be welcome to them; it would be life to them, to be certainly satisfied that his blood is their ransom, and that their sins are blotted out thereby; I say, fain they would, but they dare not yet close with Christ for their lives; they dare not set up their rest here; they dare not sit down with any such conclusion; but still there is something or other, that remains, that must be removed out of the way, before they can make this certain conclusion, Christ is theirs. Now, my principal errand is, at this time, is to this latter sort of people; a people, I say, whose hearts tell them, if it could appear clearly, that, without danger to them, they may say, Christ is their salvation, and sit down with this; if they could be satisfied with it, rather than their lives they would have Jesus Christ, but they dare not; something or other is wanting, they dare not lay hold upon him, and it is presumption for them to sit down satisfied, Christ is theirs; this is the generation I am at present to deal with, and to declare, by the power of Jesus Christ, his clear mind to them, and by that power to pluck them out of the mire wherein for the present they stick fast that he is called, and directed to Christ, and while he can see nothing else but sin in him, he should not stay for any preparations and qualifications in him fitting him for Christ; that is till his heart is cleansed, and his life reformed, but as vile a sinner as he is, and in the view of all the notorious sins he has lived in, should go to Christ, and venture his soul on him. The design of these expressions, however offensive they may be to some, is not to encourage men in sin; nor do they suppose, that men, on coming to Christ, may, or will continue such as they have been before; for an alteration in heart and life, follows at once upon coming to Christ; by faith the heart is purified, that works by love, and is attended by the fruits of righteousness; but to show that nothing should hinder or discourage sensible sinners, though ever so vile, from immediate coming to Christ, and that nothing will hinder him from receiving such, and that such should not wait for any qualifications to fit them for him; and if they had them, should not bring them to him for that purpose; but should come as sinners, and commit their souls unto him, believing in him unto salvation. Thus Saul, in the height of his rebellion, when his heart and mouth were filled with blasphemy against Christ, and bitterness against his people, and in the full pursuit of these lusts, the Lord called him by his grace, and revealed his Son in him; Christ appeared to him; light shone

heavy laden persons, let us consider these three things; first, what this coming to Christ is, that is here spoken of. Secondly, what his purpose is in proposing this coming to him. Thirdly, what he means by this expression of his, "I will in no wise cast him out." I shall speak briefly of the two former, because the life of Christ's purpose lies in the last of these particulars.

First, what doth Christ mean by coming unto him? In verse 35, he will give you his mind himself, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Mark it well, he makes coming and believing, in sense, all one; for if you observe it, such as Christ deals withal they are unsatisfied and empty ones; now he satisfies the empty; and whose emptiness will he fill? Even of those that believe in him, that come to him; believing and coming therefore are all one, so that to come to Christ, is to believe in him. But we are as far to seek as we were, you will say, what is that believing on Christ? In John 1:12, you shall see what it is to believe on him. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Here he makes receiving and believing all one, as before he made coming and believing. The sum, in brief, is this, that coming to Christ is no more but the receiving of him for shelter and relief. A man is said to come to a strong-hold, when he enters into it for his security and safety; he doth not stand hacking and hammering, shall I, or shall I not? But danger forces him, and in he gets, the door being open, and comes to his stronghold; so a person comes to Christ; Christ opening, he slips in, and ventures himself with him, and casts himself into his arms, and he will sink or swim with him.

Beloved, whoever you are that can but come to him, be you what you will, or may be, I say, if you come to him, to venture

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around him; grace reached his heart, and brought him at once to the feet of Jesus; hence he says, "I, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious person, I obtained mercy;" on which Beza has these words, "these are the preparatory works the Apostle sets himself off with;" for nothing intervenes between his having been all this, and his obtaining mercy, as the cause of it, or as fitting him for it; and had he been guilty of adultery, drunkenness, and swearing, {crimes not greater than what he had been guilty of} he could, and no doubt would have said, I Paul, the adulterer, the drunkard, the swearer, I obtained mercy. Gill.

yourselves upon the rock Christ, to sink or swim, as he will support and uphold you, counting him a refuge, to have him for your succor; he "in no wise will he cast you out."

But, secondly, to what purpose doth Christ propose coming here will some say? Beloved, I propound this the rather, because I conceive men mistake the mind of Christ concerning this coming. You must not imagine, that our motion of coming is the primary mover that gives motion to Christ to open and entertain; as if our coming did stir him up to set open, and give entrance. Christ hath not any such thought in him that we must come, and therefore will own us for his own; for it is certainly true, the very motion of our coming to Christ, is from himself, and from his coming to us, before we do so much as move. It is a common principle known to all divines, and most people; we are first acted, and then we act. First, Christ gives to us to come, and then, by his gift, we come to him; we must not imagine that by coming to Christ, he is moved and invited towards us, and is stirred up to open to us, and give entertainment to us; but his first coming to us, and living in us, stirs us up to motion. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." {Eph.2:1} Beloved, is there death till Christ quickens? Where then can there be this motion of ours, before he himself be come with his life? Where there is no life, you know there is no motion; and till the fountain of life communicates it, there can be none; therefore it is Christ that gives this coming unto men, and he having given it, they come to him. But what is the purpose of Christ then, in speaking of coming here, as if this were a preparation or a previous condition, that there is no portion in Christ, till there be first coming?

I answer, mark the scope well, for you shall find Christ doth not intend a necessary condition, but the removal of all objections; he doth not intend to put us on doing to get him, but to take away all obstacles that may hinder us from coming to him; and the emphasis of the text doth not lie upon coming, but upon this, "in no wise will I cast them off;" as if he had said, you are poor wretches; you think I am so hard-hearted, I will cast you off, you are so sinful; but let not this trouble you; whatever sinfulness

you have, that, in common apprehension, may hinder me from receiving you coming to me, for all this I will not cast you out when you come. As when a man says to a poor man, come to my house, I will give you something; he proposeth no conditions but grace to him; you shall have something, I will give you this and that.

But, I will come to the third, the main thing I intend at this time, namely, what Christ intends when he saith, "I will in no wise cast you out." Oh; the depth and unsearchable grace that is comprehended in these few words! If it might shine with its own brightness to your spirits, how would you go away leaping and rejoicing, with joy unspeakable and glorious! Why, the Lord is able to communicate to you, above all we are able to ask or think. "I will in no wise cast you out;" do but come, and nothing, I say, nothing shall stand between you and me, to put a bar to hinder an entrance to me.

There are two estates whereto this grace mentioned may belong; either that estate wherein is the breaking forth of the first light to the soul; or that estate wherein, after light is broken forth, darkness seems to come again in the place of it; and this passage of Christ hath reference to both these estates.

First, the first estate wherein light begins first to break out, the first dawning of the light of Christ. To give you an instance, and so bring the business close; suppose a person, as the Apostle does, "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" {Eph.2:1,2;} I say, suppose a person to be in the worst condition you can imagine; single out the vilest man in the world, the notablest drunkard that ever breathed, the greatest whoremaster, and the lewdest person that can be imagined; such a person as this, and continuing to this very instant, now before the Lord, as he was before, without any change and alteration in the world until this time; suppose such a person; by this text it appears so manifest, that if the Lord do but grant, and hath but put a willingness and readiness of spirit

into this man, that Christ he would have, if it might appear he might have him; if his heart do but say, I would have him, all that sinfulness, though to this instant continued in, is no bar in the world, but this man may claim his portion in Christ, and have as certain security that his portion is there, as any other man may have.[63] Mark well, I say, this passage, "I will in no wise cast him out;" our Saviour plainly imports, that there neither is, nor can be devised, no not by God himself, any one consideration whatsoever, which might occasion him to put off; or say nay, to any one that comes; no consideration in the world, I say, can so aggravate a man's condition, could he make it as bad as the devils themselves; yet, if there be but a coming to Christ, there can be no consideration in the highest pitch of sinfulness for him to reject, or put by a person coming to him; for, you must know, Christ is well acquainted with all the objections the heart of man {nay the devil himself} can make against the freeness of his grace, and life by him; to save labour, therefore, in this one passage, "I will in no wise cast out," Christ at once answers all the objections that could be made. And I dare be bold to maintain, in his name and stead; let a man but say, and lay down this for granted, come he would, Christ he would have rather than his life; let this be granted for a truth, I will be bold with Christ out of this passage to answer ten thousand objections, even fully to the silencing of every one that can be made, "I will in no wise cast him out;" that is, I will upon no consideration that can be imagined and conceived. I know the objections are many, and they seem to be very strong in respect of such a person to whom the Lord hath given a willingness and desire of spirit, to close with Christ, and yet, dare not do the thing; I say, they are many, and very strong; but, let them be what they will, you shall see by-and-by they come to no value in the world, there is no strength in them. Let me tell you, the Lord hath sent me, at this time, "to proclaim liberty to such captives," that are in this sad, bitter, and {to their thinking} desperate condition; liberty God hath given thee, if thou wilt come freely; nothing in

63 Here you see clearly, the Doctor supposes willingness and readiness of spirit to come to Christ, put into such a sinner; which is owing to power and grace thus making willing, and such a soul will never be rejected let him be ever so vile. Gill.

the world shall hinder thee.

But let us consider the objections that may be made, and therein see what ground poor sinners may have to forsake their own mercy, and so become their own tormentors. I dare not close with Christ, {saith many a poor soul} if I sit down and close with him, being satisfied with this argument, Christ offers himself to sinners, this is presumption; why so? I am the filthiest creature that ever breathed; I should stink above ground with my sins, if you knew what a creature I am, and what an ungodly sinner I am; I am a blasphemer; I do nothing but blaspheme the God of heaven; and I blaspheme his word to persecution; my spirit is mad against the Gospel itself.

I answer, in a word, reckon up all that you can imagine, suppose the worst you can conceive, the truth of the worst, that you have not belied yourselves a jot, in proposing the abominable filthiness and loathsome baseness of your filthy condition; suppose this be imagined; what of this? Surely, as long as I am in this case, Christ cannot belong to me, there is no coming to him for me. If this be truth that you say, that such and such filthiness stands between Christ and you, that though you come, there could be no entertainment with him for you; supposing this to be true, this that Christ speaks is most certainly false; for, saith he, "I will in no wise cast you off;" that is, upon no consideration will I cast you off. You say, upon this consideration, I am so abominably vile, there will be casting off; if this you say be true, that which Christ saith, must be false; there is a point-blank contradiction between these two; and, therefore, either Christ must call in these words again, thus generally delivered, and he must put in this exception that you put in, or else his word and yours cannot agree.

You say, upon such considerations, there is no admittance; and upon such and such there is admittance; Christ saith, "I will in no wise cast you out;" notwithstanding this consideration, I will receive you, be you what you will, do but come, and for all that, you shall be welcome. But, some will say, men must be fitted for Christ, before he will ever own them. I answer again, is there this exception put into the grant of Christ, except you be fitted for

me, I will cast you out? Then you may say indeed, except you be fitted for him he will cast you out; but then, I say, how can this be true, "I will in no wise cast him out?" The words, must run thus, "him that comes to me, {if he be fitted and prepared} I will in no wise cast out;" but if he be not fitted and prepared, I will cast him out; but do they run so? Christ looks not for fitness, but people may be capable of communion with him without fitness; he takes them into communion with himself, and afterwards fits them for it, as he would have them; but, beforehand, there is no fitness; suppose what fitness you will, in expecting the grant, I say, in expecting the grant of Christ, fitness or not fitness is all one; "Come to me, I will in no wise cast you out."

Peradventure, though the text seems to be so clear, yet you will say, surely the grace of God is not so large as you seem to express it? There must be something expected and considered in the person coming, or there will be no receiving and entertaining by Christ. I answer, it were an easy thing, {if time would give leave} to show that through the whole scripture, the Lord Christ hath such a purpose to set forth the glory of the grace of his Father, as that he will have men know, that all the fitness of persons, to communicate or participate of Christ, is their desperate sinfulness; I say, nothing but sinfulness is that which is the fitness that Christ looks for in men.[64] I beseech you, peruse that passage, never to be forgotten, {Ezekiel, chapter 16,} where the Holy Ghost, in the beginning of the chapter, first states the case concerning the condition of persons; then makes the conclusion, the state being granted. Suppose your condition of sinfulness rise up to the height of the illustration there mentioned, of a child polluted in its blood; which kind of expression the Holy Ghost useth, as that which doth, of all other things in the world, most set out the loathsome nastiness, and intolerable filthiness of sin in men; "thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple

64 Not what makes a soul lovely to Christ, but what makes Christ necessary and suitable to that. Gill.

thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born." {Ez.16:3-5} Here is the nature of the sinfulness of persons polluted in blood. There was such a filthy loathsomeness in this pollution, that it was beyond the pity of any creature; it was so abominably filthy, that there was no place for pity; nay, more, such pollution of blood there was, that did occasion casting out, as if the abiding of that person in the room any longer, would poison all the rest; and, therefore, because there could not be an enduring of that loathsomeness any longer, there must be flinging out upon the dunghill.

Suppose your sins rise to this very height, and there is such a stench of filthiness in them, that all the world should even vomit to think of that sinfulness that you have acted and committed; what of all this? Surely, you will say that there is no portion in Christ for me, as long as my case is such a case as this. Observe the strange expression of the Holy Ghost, "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live;" there is a great deal of difference between saying, Live, and casting out of such persons; when no eye pitied thee, that time which was the time of thy blood, "that time was the time of love." This is strange indeed, that all the creatures in the world should turn against such a person, as should be so abominable, that men should abhor him; and yet the time of his pollution, should be Christ's time of love. Well, but you will say, Surely, before Christ will communicate himself, and give up himself to such men, for all this, the case must be altered with them; you shall see it is no such matter, but directly the contrary. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." {vs.8} What strange expressions are here! Methinks your hearts cannot but be wrapped up into heaven, in admiration of them; these the Lord aggravates to the highest terms that can be imagined; setting forth

the most horrible loathsomeness of the sinfulness of men; and yet that time of sinfulness, was the time of God's love; and not only so, but a time wherein God sware to and entered into covenant with this person, and became his.

But, you will say, there was some cleansing before. You shall see the Holy Ghost in the next words makes it appear it is not so; mark the words well, "then washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil;" then, when I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Here was not first a washing, and then swearing, and entering into a covenant; but there was first swearing and entering into covenant, and then washing with water afterwards; here is a coming and closing with Jesus Christ, even while the state of a person is the filthiest in the world; and I tell you, beloved, either you must close with Christ for your comfort, unworthy as you are, or you must never receive him while you live. "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You that will bring righteousness with you to be received of Christ; I tell you, he came not to save such persons. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." {Rom.5:6}

But, you will say, for all this high aggravation of loathsomeness and sinfulness, my case is worse than all this that you speak of; therefore there is something in my condition, that if I come to Christ he must cast me off; here is nothing but positive filthiness; it is true, indeed, this condition is very bad, but my case rises higher; besides a positive loathsomeness in myself, I am a rebel, a sturdy enemy, I fight against God, I quarrel with him, and take up arms against him. Imagine your condition a condition of as great enmity and madness against God, as your hearts can possibly devise; what then? Sure you will say, if I be such an enemy, I must lay down arms before Christ will have to do with me, or admit me to come to him. Will a king let a cut-throat traitor, while he hath thoughts in his heart to murder him, will he let him come with a naked knife into his presence, and graciously embrace him in his arms?

For answer, still see the close of the text, observe that if this be true, that in respect of this rebelliousness in thy spirit against God, thou sayest, if I come, Christ will cast me off; these words "in no wise" cannot be true; for here is a consideration, as before, that makes, an exception, and so frustrates thy entrance to Christ, though there be coming.

Beloved, do you think it was out of the thoughts of Christ, to wit, your enmity, and rebellion? And if he thought of it, do you think he would not have put it in? Surely he was wise enough, and knew what he said, and certainly had rebelliousness itself in his thoughts when he spoke the words, in no wise; and certainly this shall not prejudice you, but if you come to Christ, he is as much yours as if you never took up arms against him. But to clear up this truth to you more fully, look into Psalm 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." Mark it well; you say there is no dwelling for Christ with rebels, that is your position; I am a rebel, so there can be no entertainment with him for me; but, saith the text, {note it I pray,} that he received gifts for the rebellious, that "the Lord God might dwell among them." If that be not clear enough look into Romans 5:6-10, "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life;" mark the expression, it is a strange one; you must directly deny the truth of what the Apostle says if you will stand to this principle, that as long as you are enemies there is no admittance unto Christ for you; for, saith the text, "while we were enemies, we were reconciled;" not that Christ provided reconciliation for enemies, that when they be amended, they shall be saved, but during enmity itself they receive reconciliation. I do not speak this to the intent that any should conceive that God leaves persons rebellious, vile, and loathsome, as he finds them, when he closeth with them; but, I say, at that time, when the Lord closeth with persons, he closeth with them in such a state of rebellion; and if thou comest to Christ in this condition, it manifestly shall appear to thee, that he will

open his bosom for thy head to rest upon, {Jn.13:25,} as well as for the most righteous person in the world, and his breast for thy mouth to suck. {Isa.66:11, 12.}[65]

He shuts the door to none that comes; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." {Is.55:1} Let everyone; there is not one exempted; yet, not I, saith one, not I, saith another; but the Holy Ghost saith, "let everyone come." No man under heaven that hath a heart to come, and suck of the breasts of Christ, but the way is free for him; the fountain is set open for all sin and uncleanness; at the pool of Bethesda every impotent person might step in; at the bath the poorest man in the world may go, if he will, and step in; neither is the loathsomest person in the world excluded; now Christ is that hath opened for all comers; there is no comer shall ever be cast off; I dare be bold to say, there never did miscarry any person in the world that did indeed come to him; if there did any miscarry, there is no credit to be given to the words of Christ himself.

But I see I must hasten. I come now to consider the power of this expression to persons that had the light risen to them, but think now darkness is come over them again; I mean those that have received Christ, and have believed, but something or other hath happened, that even they suspect, that if they should come to him, he would cast them off. But if the first proposition be granted, that is discussed, then much more this; "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" {Rom.8:32} "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." {Rom.5:10} If while we are without strength, Christ in due time died for the ungodly; if while we were sinners he died for us, how much more shall we be saved from wrath being reconciled! All this is to show that if Christ did not shut out persons in the

65 52 And it should be observed, that all before spoken, is said to such who are deemed sensible of their rebellion and vileness; and also under some temptations that Christ will not receive them, being so very sinful. Gill

worst condition, when they had no acquaintance at all with him, much less will he cast out those that he had familiarity with in former times; there is no condition in the world a believer is subject to, that may occasion the least suspicion that Christ will cast him out, if he come.

But you will say, suppose a believer falls into some scandalous sins, and notorious sins, it may be to commit murder and adultery together, as David did; surely now there is some cause of suspicion, that if he come presently to Christ after he commits these things, he will send him packing. I answer, if this be true, there must be a putting in of this exception into the text, if thou art a believer and commit such and such a sin, though thou comes to me, I will cast thee out; and if it be so, Christ must cut off that large expression of his, "I will in no wise cast thee out." You will say, this is strange doctrine; suppose a believer commit adultery and murder, may he presently look upon Christ, and in him see a discharge of his sins, and reconciliation by him, and part in him, at that very time he commits them? Surely there must be large humiliation and confession of these sins; and there must be a long continuance in this too; he must not apply comfort presently; there must be more brokenness of heart yet, and more yet, and more yet; and this is the objection of the world.

I answer, I confess the crime is great in its kind, and, for the present, it may silence the voice of truth itself; but whatever becomes of it, that Christ may have the glory of his grace, and the glory of that fulness of redemption wrought all at once; let me tell you, believers cannot commit those sins that may give just occasion of suspicion to them, that if they come to Christ he would cast them out; let me not be mistaken in that I say; I know the enemies of the Gospel will make an evil construction of it; yet a believer, I say, cannot commit those sins that can give occasion to him to suspect, that if he come presently to Christ, he would cast him off.

But must not he confess first, and be afflicted in his soul, before he can think that he shall be received if he come?

For answer to it; I deny not, but acknowledge that when a

believer sins, he must confess these sins; and the greatest end and ground of this confession is that which Joshua speaks concerning Achan, Joshua 7:19, "and Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." That is, my son, confess thy faults, and give glory to God. A believer in confession of sin gives glory to the great God of heaven and earth; and that must be the glorious end of the confession of his sin, that God may be owned, as the sole and only Saviour; except we acknowledge sin, we cannot acknowledge salvation; we cannot acknowledge any virtue in the works and sufferings of Christ; he might have saved his labour, and never come into the world; all that he did could not be acknowledged to be of worth to us, if there had not been sin from which he should save us; he that indeed confesses his sin, confesses he had perished if Christ had not died for him; nay, he confesseth, that nothing in the world, but Christ, could save him.

Secondly, I grant, a believer should be sensible of sin, that is, of the nature of it; but this is that I mainly desire to imprint upon your spirits, that he may certainly conclude, even before confession of sin, the reconciliation that is made between God and him, the interest he hath in Christ, and the love of Christ embracing him; in a word, before a believer confesses his sin, he may be as certain of the pardon of it, as after confession.53 I say, there is as much ground to be confident of the pardon of sin to a believer, as soon as ever he hath committed it, though he hath not made a solemn act of confession, as to believe it after he hath performed all the humiliation in the world. What is the ground of the pardon of sin? "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name's sake." Here is pardon, and the fountain of it is in God himself. What is it that discharges a believer? The rise of it is God's own sake; and if this be the ground of pardon, then this being held out, a believer may be assured of pardon as soon as he commits any sin, and may close with it. Pardon of sin depends upon the unchangeableness of God, and not on the stability of the creature; all the pardon in the world

that any person shall enjoy, is revealed in this word of grace; and it is the most absurd thing in the world to think that the soul may fetch out a pardon anywhere, but in the word of grace. Is pardon held out in it, and held out to sinners, as they are sinners? And doth God hold out his love to persons before good or evil be done by them, that the purpose of God may stand according to election, not of works, but of grace? And doth a believer find it thus in the word of grace, and may not he rest upon it when he finds it? I beseech you consider; either Christ did not reckon with the Father for all the sins of his people one with another, when he did offer up himself, or he did; if he left out such and such a scandalous sin when he reckoned with him, then Christ did not save to the utmost all them that come to God by him; then there must come another Saviour, to reckon for that which he left out.

Well, you will say, Christ did reckon for all sin with his Father; if he did reckon with him for all, then did he pay him the full price for everyone when he died upon the cross. Then the Father being paid, satisfaction was acknowledged from his hand; he hath beheld the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied; "and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." {I Jn.1:7} Well, doth God acknowledge full satisfaction for all sin under hand and seal? If it be so, what ground is there of suspicion that Christ will not receive you, but cast you off for such and such transgressions, rather than for such and such? If the reckoning were for all, wherefore do you make such a distinction, where God makes none? If it be made for all, one with another, and the price be paid for all, wherein comes the ground of suspicion? Hath God taken pay for all, and doth that sin, being committed, appear before him still? And must he have more than Christ hath paid? Do not entertain such base thoughts of him. There is not a sin committed this day, but it was as clear before God

53 Not that confession of sin is a needless thing; the Doctor has before observed, that when a believer sins, he must confess his sins, and points out the ends for which confession is to be made; but then he is not to consider this as the ground or cause of the forgiveness of sin; but being under a sense of sin committed,

is at once to look to Christ, and deal with his blood for the pardon of it; and not stay until a solemn, formal confession is made, as if his pardon depended on that; we are to confess sin, as Aaron confessed the sins of Israel over the scape-goat; and we should confess ours over a sin-bearing Saviour, with a view to their being laid on him, and satisfied for by him; and never does a soul more ingenuously confess sin, or more kindly mourn for it, than when he has the clearest view of the free, and full forgiveness of it, by the blood of Christ. Gill from all eternity, with all the aggravation, as it is now; and, when God reckoned with Christ for the sins of believers, he took into his consideration the utmost extent of every sin, what it would rise unto, and took a price answerable to the nature and quality of them, of his Son; be they small or great, be they what they will, the price was raised by the Father upon the back and score of Christ, answerable to the transgression.

Now, hath Christ paid all to the utmost farthing? How comes God then to put in this as an exception, as if now there were something done that requires something more than what Christ hath done, before God and you can be friends?

You will say peradventure, in all this will we directly strike at all manner of meeting with God in humiliation and prayer, and fasting and confession of sins.

I answer, with the Apostle, "do we herein make void the law? God forbid! Yea, rather, we establish it." May not a person come and acknowledge his fault to his prince, after he hath received his pardon under his hand, when he is brought from the place of execution? Nay, may not he acknowledge it with melting and extreme bitterness of spirit, because he knoweth he hath a pardon? It is but a sordid and gross conceit in the heart of men to think, that there can be no humiliation for sin, except they be in despair; I say, that when Christ reveals himself to your spirits, you shall find your hearts more wrought upon with sweet meltings, relentings and breakings of spirit, when you see your sins pardoned, than in the most despairing condition you can be in. It hath been often taken notice of, of many malefactors, that though when they have come to the place of execution their

hearts have been so hard that they could not shed a tear; yet, when they have heard their pardon read, and seen themselves out of danger, their hearts, that were so hard before, have melted into floods of tears; and so, I say, that heart that could not relent to see the filthy loathsomeness of sin, while he did not see his pardon, yet, after the knowledge of that, melts into tears, and hath such relenting that none in the world can have, but he that knoweth it. I say, the grace of God, which brings salvation, having appeared unto men, doth more teach them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world than all the arguments besides can persuade men, even for the glory of their God, the manifestation of their thankfulness to him, and the being fruitful unto others. {Tit.2:11-13}

We are to walk in every way that God hath chalked out unto us; but if we think our righteousness, deep humiliation, large relents of spirits, sorrow for sin, and our confession thereof, must make our way to the bowels of Christ, take heed lest you set up a false Christ. When you bring anything to Christ, you deprive him of that which is his greatest prerogative, and give it to your fasting and humiliations; it is the prerogative of Christ alone to bring you to himself. But, you will say, all the promises of pardon run with this proviso, in case men humble themselves, and do this and that, then pardon is theirs; but otherwise it is none of theirs; take heed of such doctrine. We have had Arminianism exceedingly exploded among us hitherto, and there hath been much complaint against it; but if we conceive that God, in pardoning sin, hath an eye to confession of it, here is the doing of works for pardon of sin; and how far short this comes of Arminianism, let all the world judge.

Beloved, consider I beseech you, doth God give grace upon obedience? What power shall work such a disposition? Supposing a branch be a branch of the wild vine that is mentioned in the prophet Isaiah, such a branch as there is death in it, what shall alter the nature of that deadness in it? Must not there be an engrafting of it into the true vine? Must not the wild olive be put into the sweet olive, before it cease to be wild, and become a

good branch? You must know that we are all wild vines, bringing forth fruit unto death; how shall our qualities be changed? Must we be changed first, and then being changed, come to Christ? Is not Christ, the vine, who by virtue of our union to himself doth change our corrupt and bad natures? Do you think, that a branch of the wild olive, must become a branch of the true olive before it can be put into it, and then, in regard of that, be put into it? Oh; that the order of Christ may be established with you; namely, his beginning to close with men in blood, and the power of Christ thus beginning with them, framing their spirits to himself, in such a manner that neither men, nor angels, nor any other creature, can frame any spirit for him, till he come himself. It is certain, without him you can do nothing; as he saith of himself, {Jn.15:5,} and as the Apostle confesseth of himself, {Rom.7:18,} how will you, therefore, have gracious or previous dispositions and qualifications, as you call them, before Christ can own you; when as it must be Christ, and he given, that must frame these dispositions in you?

You must, you say, have eyes to see your folly and misery, and be humbled in the sense thereof, and hearts to close with Christ, and then he will become yours. How contrary is this, to the Lord, by his prophet in Isaiah 42:6,7, "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Who opens these blind eyes, but Christ, as he is given for a covenant to open them? Can men see either their own folly, or behold their need of him, or conceive the sweetness of him, while they are stark blind? They are stark blind, till Christ, after he is given for a covenant, opens the eyes of men. To think that men have their eyes opened before they come to Christ, whereas when they come to him, he opens them, is to say, we see when we are blind.

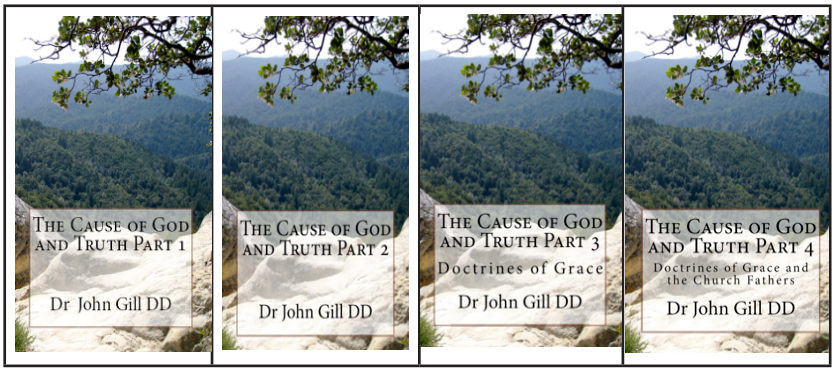
You shall see, in Scripture, that Christ is given so freely to men, that all considerations are taken away from them, that all

discouragements may be taken from a sinner, that if he come to him, and close with him, if he have a heart, he may come without bar.

To conclude; if there be any willingness in thee to close with Christ, so that fain thou wouldest close with him if thou mightest; I say, thou may'st receive all the embraces of Christ into thy arms, and receive his kisses;[66] upon thy mouth, with as much boldness, and confidence, as any believer in the world; for it is not for their sakes, for their amendments and reformation, their righteousness or holiness, that Christ hath mercy on them; but for his own sake it is that he embraces them, and manifests his love unto them.

Further Publications

The Cause of God and Truth
John Gill D.D.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Doctrines of Grace and the Church Fathers
Dr John Gill DD

In four volumes (5.5" x 8.5" (13.97 x 21.59 cm)

The following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced

66 Kisses, as they are indications of, so they are incentives to love. When the truths of the Gospel come with power upon a sinner's heart, they let in, not only a great deal of light, but also a large measure of love; faith comes hereby, and that works by love, both to Christ and to his Gospel. Gill.

hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work.

In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the Universal Scheme, and against the Calvinistic Scheme, in which their arguments and objections are answered, and the several passages set in a just and proper light. These, and what are contained in the following Part in favour of the Particular Scheme, are extracted from Sermons delivered in a Wednesday evening's lecture.

The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminian, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

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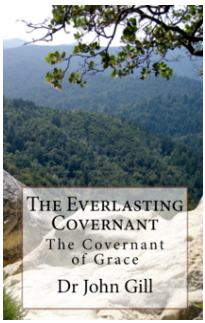
The Everlasting Covenant



By John Gill

This book treats the subject of the Everlasting Covenant of grace. A covenant made between the three Persons Father, Son and Holy Ghost, before the world began. That has been gradually

revealed by means of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant as declared by the Lord Jesus and His Apostles. It is by this covenant the whole Israel of God are saved.

Dr. John Gill (23 November 1697 – 14 October 1771) was an English Baptist pastor, biblical scholar, and theologian who held to a firm Calvinistic soteriology. Born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, he attended Kettering Grammar School where he mastered the Latin classics and learned Greek by age 11. He continued self-study in everything from logic to Hebrew, his love for the latter remaining throughout his life. He is the only person to write a commentary on each very of the bible and after its completion wrote his Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity from which this subject The Everlasting Covenant is an extract.

This book has be republished by Bierton Particular Baptists with a view to promote the cause of God and truth and to encourage all to read and study the scriptures for themselves. A knowledge of this subject will enable one to be free from the pitfalls of Arminianism.

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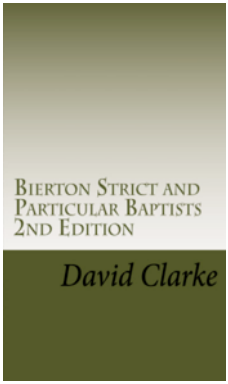
Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist



by David Clarke

This book tells the story and life of David Clarke in the form of an autobiography. It is no ordinary book in that David and his brother were both notorious criminals in the 60's, living in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, where they were MODs and were both sent to prison for and malicious wounding and carrying a fire arm without a license . They were however both converted from crime to Christ and turned their lives around.

This story tells of David's conversion to Christianity in 1970 and that of Michael's conversion, 1999 some 30 years later.

It tells of their time in HMP Canterbury Prison and David's time in HMP Wormwood Scrubs and Dover Borstal. It also tells of David's criminal activity and the crimes he committed before his miraculous conversion from crime to Christ, during a bad experience on LSD, in 1970.

It tells how he became a Christian over night and how he learned to read in order to come to a fuller knowledge of the gospel. He learned to read through reading the bible and classical Christian literature. David tells of the events that led to him making a confession to the police about 24 crimes he had committed since leaving Dover Borstal in 1968 and of the court case where he was not sentenced. It tells how David's educated himself and went on to Higher education, and graduated with a Certificate in Education and how he went on to teach Electronics, for over 20 years, in colleges of Higher and Further Education.

It tells of his life as a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church, which was a Gospel Standard cause, and how he was called by the Lord and sent by the church to preach the gospel. David tells of the various difficulties that he faced once he discovered the many doctrinal errors amongst the various Christian groups he met and of the opposition that he experience when he sought to correct them. David recorded his experience and finding in his book "The Bierton Crisis" 1984, written to help others.

David's tells how his brother Michael was untouched by his conversion in 1970 and continued his flamboyant lifestyle ending up doing a 16 year prison sentence, in the Philippines, in 1996.

David tells how Michael too was converted to Christianity through reading C.S. Lewis's book, "Mere Christianity", and him being convinced that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God. David then tells of his mission to the Philippines, to bring help and assistance to Michael, in 2001 and of their joint venture in helping in the rehabilitation of many former convicted criminals, not only in New Bilibid Prison but other Jails in the Philippines.

David tells how he felt compelled to write this story in his book ,"Converted On LSD Trip". once he got news of his brothers arrest, in the Philippines, via ITN Television news broadcast, in 1995. This book was published when he got news of his brothers conversion from crime to Christ in 1999, which was after serving 5 years of his 16 year sentence.

This story is told in their joint book, "Trojan Warriors", that contains the testimonies of 66 notorious criminals who too had turned there lives around, from crime to Christ, 22 of which testimonies are men on Death Row.

David say he believes his story could be of great help to any one seeking to follow the Lord Jesus Christ but sadly Michael died in New Bilibid Prison of tuberculosis, in 2005 before their vision of bringing help to many was realized.

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